

## Characters

- Men
- Women

## Act

The opening for AINT SUPPOSED TO DIE A NATURAL DEATH is the Star Spangled Banner itself and in the first place poetic justicewise and symbolicwise its a natural. The legend is that the man who wrote it (one of our guys, one of the good guys) was being held prisoner on one of the bad guy's boats. That night the bad guys were firing their cannons and attacking the friends of the good guy. The good guy was very worried about his side losing the war and the future of the world without democracy to offer a refuge from tyranny, etc' but the next morning when our good guy prisoner manages to peep out through a hole he sees the flag of what will become that new nation with god always on its side, champion of the weak, defender of liberty, freedom and justice for all men, fluttering brave and proud in the early light of the dawn, or so the legend goes. The legend always lays it on pretty thick on the liberty-democracy-justice-freedom side and slides over the real nitty-gritty side that started the war in the first place, MONEY, or rather taxes, as it's politely referred to in the legend. Yep — what finally put the kind wouldn't-hurt-a-flea-colonies, our loyal hardworking-religious-forebearing-forefathers who had unflinchingly taken so much abuse from the wicked king on the warpath was pretty much the same old root of evil as always and a preview of coming attractions if there ever was one, seeing that Bread has been the most dominant denominator in the good old USA ever since it began — anyway the good guy prisoner was so inspired that he took out a piece of paper and wrote the national anthem right then and there on the enemy's ship and everything.

In the second place too the national anthem is perfect because it lays out to people where their heads are at nationwise, at least where they want other folks to think their heads are — besides, when the old notes start and the old knees start stiffening in a reflex action, folks get to remember how conditioned they are, maybe even start wondering about what else they are conditioned to besides the Star Spangled Banner. The song is played straight, not jazzed up or solemnized down, and the house lights stay up full so folks can make their statement and be seen and dig other people making theirs. Decisions, decisions. Does standing mean you want crackers on the Supreme Court? Does it mean you have forgotten the Vietnam casualty lists, or does it mean you are remembering the guys who got it at the Alamo or the Battle of the Bulge? . . . Does sitting mean praising Malcolm . . . does it mean betraying the Kennedys . . . is it showing solidarity with Kent State or is it showing solidarity with Fred Hampton? . . . What means what? . . . Stand? . . . Sit? . . . Bob up and down? . . . Go blind? . . . Stoop? . . . Shit? The stage doesn't have curtains and the set hulks there, a multi-leveled composite of all the urban black reservations. It is scarred and comic, dangerous and tender, with things blending and shifting back and forth in an instant the way they do in reality, there's a car carcass and there are light bulbs, lampposts, signs, dark rooms, stoops, steps, corners, concrete crotches, whiskey bars and prison bars. It's that place black folks mean when they talk about the Block. But what really dominates the stage towering high above the set and street is something you don't see really on the Block, something that we believe, hidden in the clouds of the national ethos, clouds that say we are the ultimate land of the fair shake, everybody a Horatio Alger, U'S'A' über alles (that's the second point of what using the national anthem as the overture was trying to say), in fact some people swear there really isn't anything up there but it's there alright and if you squint your mind and stare you can see it clearly. On the stage just like in reality it towers above the Block and dominates the street. It appears to be some kind of perch, like the platform politicians make promises from or the thing they spot whales from in the movies on Saturdays or hang patriots from on late late shows or string gunslingers or niggers from. Green ribbons hang down from over the railing of the perch like some immense vine trailing and spreading over the front of the set and into the street below. The ribbons give the set the air of a prison, or a gigantic present.

After the overture the band moves straight into the first tune. The first chorus is played pompously like the organ at Radio City Music Hall. As the majestic notes float down from the second-floor room in the set where the band is stationed, the house lights begin to dim. At the second chorus the music begins to liven up, the house lights are cut and the stage lights have turned slightly bluer . . .

And here comes some cat dragging ass along in from stage left regretting every step he takes. He keeps looking in the direction back where he came from. He stops. He sighs. There is no doubt that something has got to be very wrong with his bottoms, he has the mincing shuffle folks call the bad foot special. He sits on a stoop and rubs his ankles, which is as close as he dares to get to the center of his pain. Lord lord lord, he limps back up to his feet and looks back down the street . . . but it's still empty . . . he shakes his head and tells it like it be.

THE WAY MY CORNS ARE HURTING ME  
WHEN THE MAN RUNS HIS GAME  
LORD KNOWS HE SURE RUNS IT MEAN

He is rapping for every greasy-brown-bag-carrying brother and sister round-tripping downtown and doing time on them lonely corners.

FOUR BUSES GONE BY FOR THEM  
AND NOT ONE GONE BY FOR ME

The headlights of a brother in his El Dorado cadillac almost runs him over and swoops on across the stage . . . he yells after him,

CRUISE ON IN YOUR BAD RADO BROTHER  
LET THE WORLD KNOW WE IS SOMEBODY

Sunshine gets excited and stamps his foot, a mistake if there ever was one . . . he doubles up moaning in pain, lord lord lord .

..

NO JUST DONT MAKE NO SENSE  
THE WAY MY CORNS ARE HURTING ME  
WHEN YOU BLACK EVEN WAITING AINT EASY  
STAND HERE IM LOITERING  
IF I WALK IM PROWLING  
AND IF I RUN IM ESCAPING  
NO JUST DONT MAKE NO SENSE  
THE WAY MY CORNS ARE HURTING ME

He locomotes back over to the stoop and eases himself down. His plight is almost out of a vaude-ville number — almost.

IF I SIT IM SHIFTLESS  
BUT LORD KNOWS THERE'D BE HELL TO PAY  
IF I LOOK LIKE I EVEN LOOK LIKE I WAS EVEN GETTIN READY  
TO GET ON MY FEET SOMEDAY  
EVERYBODY BE GETTING IN THE RACE TO KEEP ME IN MY PLACE  
MY BROTHERS BE RUSHING IN THERE TO FAT MOUTH ME DOWN  
AND THE MAN TO SHOOT ME DOWN

Sunshine rubs his knees and gets back up and looks back down the street, still nothing looking like any kind of probable transportation for him is in sight.

AND IT JUST DONT MAKE NO SENSE  
THE WAY THESE CORNS ARE HURTING ME

He looks again and he is still out of luck. . . . He stands there holding onto the lamppost with his toes curled up from the pavement, trying to give his fussing feet what they call in legal terminology immediate relief. . . . He keeps on laying out the black man's situation.

FROWN — YOU HOSTILE  
SMILE — YOU A TOM  
LOOK TIRED YOU ON JUNK  
STUMBLE — YOU DRUNK  
IF I WASH IM A PIMP  
IF I DONT — IM A BUM  
AND THESE FEET  
WELL THESE FEET WONT LET ME BE  
NAW JUST DONT MAKE NO SENSE  
THE WAY MY CORNS ARE HURTING ME

The bus arrives, in the form of an actor carrying a steering wheel and wearing a white mask and a money changer. The bus

stops in front of Sunshine and the driver turns to him — we hear Sunshine's outraged answers.

YEAH I WANNA GET ON  
WHY YOU THINK IM STANDING HERE HUH  
DAMN RIGHT I BEEN WAITING LONG  
AIN'T YOU NEVER HEARD OF RAPID URBAN TRANSPORTATION

Sunshine limps on board, still grumbling, and the bus starts across the stage.

ALL YOU FOLKS THINK BLACK FOLKS IS FOR IS WAITING  
WAITING FOR THE SUPREME COURTS LATEST JIVE DECISION  
WAITING  
WAITING FOR THE MAN TO PICK WHO IS QUALIFIED  
WAITING IN THE EMERGENCY WARD TO DIE  
NAW JUST DONT MAKE NO SENSE  
THE WAY THESE CORNS ARE HURTING ME

The bus has crossed from one side to the other and makes a sharp turn upstage. Sunshine almost gets tossed on his ass . . . he grabs a strap just in time. . . . The brother has had it and lets the world know.

I DONT GET ME A SEAT THE REVOLUTION IS HERE  
YOU STEP ON THESE FEET AND THE REVOLUTION IS RIGHT NOW

The music rises to a full blast and the bus circles the stage and when Sunshine passes the streamers hanging down from the perch he takes one. He starts waving it and the play hits the fan. . . . A Junkie comes out of a doorway underneath the perch, he pushes up his sleeve and wraps one of the green ribbons around his arm and falls in step behind Sunshine. . . . The bus ride seems to be a parade. . . . A Rat so big a tiger would think twice before starting any crap with him comes out the doorway, jiving to the latest steps . . . just a normal-sized old six-foot-typical-product-of-the-slovenly-ghetto-environment-colored-folks-like-to-live-in Rat, hip and bodacious as he wants to be. . . . He grabs a ribbon and gets in line and immediately starts fucking with the Junkie in front of him. . . . The Pimp dressed in the latest toughest baddest cleanest styles struts through the doorway. He snaps his fingers and two girls from his stable, Big Titties and Lilly, come running through the doorway to care for anything Daddio's little heart might desire . . . they get a ribbon for Sweet Daddy and each one takes one herself . . . the Pimp gets himself a snort of cocaine, takes his ribbon and they all join the parade. . . . The parade seems to turn into a maypole dance. . . . here The Dyke, with a shiny black jacket and slicked-down hair, comes out and takes her ribbon and starts bopping along. . . . A sullen Tomboy comes out the door-way and takes her ribbon. . . . The Rat and the Junkie aren't getting along too well and the Junkie has his blade out but the Pimp gives the Rat a snort and the Rat goes to cloud nine and starts boo-gooloing and the battle cools out. . . . A Blindman comes tapping out the doorway . . . he fumbles for a ribbon and then joins the line, jiving and singing along.

Here comes a fine foxy forty-stacked Sister . . . she got one eye cocked on being bourgeois so she is a little prissy but when she walks her behind, which rotates like babies fighting under a blanket, is pure down-home soul . . . she takes her string and joins the line . . . a Square, yessirree sharp as he wanna be in last years style, comes out the doorway and the line keeps growing. . . . They are there alright . . . that's them . . . the Barmaid with her blond wig . . . the Drunk with his bottle . . . the Postal Clerk with his windbreaker on, with the name of his junior college stenciled over the pocket . . . Funky Girl the fag with her hot pants on . . . the Black Cop twirling his nightstick. . . . The Old Crazy Scavenger Lady appears from nowhere with her shopping bag of bric-a-brac . . . she is too out of it even to use the doorway and too nuts to take her ribbon and get in line. Suddenly a huge white head appears on the perch high above the Block. The white mask grins down hideously . . . the ends of the ribbons are clutched in one hand . . . it's the Man.

It wasn't really some kind of goofy passenger bus after all, or parade or maypole dance, just poor black people on a string. In a funny way somehow they know it and don't know it too and somewhere all along you and everybody else know it too. The Man reels in the streamers and life on the Block takes form and it all comes to pass, down to the smallest detail, especially that smallest detail (trees trees trees, God bless trees so you don't have to deal with the forest) as if nothing happened, as if people were masters of themselves. Ain't it the truth. Missy Soul Prissy is upstairs looking for Sunshine . . . Sunshine and the Square are shooting crap and meddling with the Barmaid. The Fag and the Blindman are over in another corner talking . . . the Drunk and the Dyke are talking too. A kid called Junebug and the Postal Clerk are shooting baskets and for once the Postal Clerk doesn't have his precious windbreaker on, the one with the name of the junior college where he went to stenciled over the pockets. . . . The Tomboy comes over and Junebug half lets her steal the ball and she takes a couple of shots and then goes up to the rooftops. A White Cop looks up and sees her and gets the notion she is a suicide and he is the

cavalry. . . He dashes up the ladder and grabs at her. . . She shakes away and starts screaming it like it is.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MISTER  
I AINT JUMPING IM LEANING OVER  
PICKING UP SOME OF THIS BREEZE  
THIS IS THE COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN

The Postal Clerk takes a last shot . . . the Square turns around and looks up . . . the Blindman twists his head straining to see with his ears.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MISTER  
IF I DIDNT JUMP WHEN SISTER GOT BUSTED  
OR JUNIOR BOY STARTED SWITCHING ROUND  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME JIM  
YOU KNOW I AINT GONNA JUMP NOW  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME BUDDY  
BESIDES HED JUST THINK IT WAS CAUSE I MISS HIM SO  
AND YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T TALK BAD ABOUT PEOPLE AFTER THEY GO  
SO HES GONE — GOOD — I SUPPOSE

Everybodys looking up now except the Junkie, who is just looking like he is going to pee.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MOTHER  
IF I DIDNT LEAP WHEN MEDGAR GOT YOUR MESSAGE  
OR MALCOLM, OR MARTIN LUTHER KING  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME JIM  
YOU KNOW I AINT GONNA DO IT NOW  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME BUDDY  
IF I GO YOULL KNOW IT  
IM TAKING ONE OR TWO LIKE YOU  
ALONG WITH ME

The Tomboy struggles with the Cop . . . down below, the crowd eats it up. A little free spectacle is always a welcome break in anybodys day and especially when you got the extra icing of a honky cop making a fool of himself trying to save a young sister who aint about to kill herself no way. The Cop hangs on in there and keeps trying to grab her and she keeps slipping away and the people whistle and shout encouragement. In the meantime, out of the subway comes a downhome Country Bumpkin with a straw between his teeth and a suitcase in his hand. The Fag tries to hit on him but he just walks away . . . the Fag smiles and makes a mental note to try again in a few more days.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MAN  
SURE HE WAS MY OLD MAN, BUT HE WAS FREE  
AIN'T NO MAN GONNA GET HIS FINGER  
CROOKED THAT HIGH UP MY POOTER  
MAKE A COUNTRY FOOL OUTA ME

Junebug and the Postal Clerk slap hands on that . . . the folks down in the street dig where she's coming from and laugh in sympathy . . . and she goes right on laying into him.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MISTER  
ITS JUST THAT THIS IS WHERE ITS AT UP HERE  
LETS YOU THINK  
THE SKY AINT UP TIGHT ITS FREE  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME BABY  
IM JUST LEANING OUT TO CATCH A LITTLE  
BREEZE AND SEE  
THEM TAIL LIGHTS GLIDING TO ETERNITY

Finally the Cop gets the no-suicide word . . . pissed off, he starts clambering back down the ladder. In the meantime, another fool gets all ready to rush in . . . the country bumpkin has seen the folks looking up and he's looked up too and seen Tomboy

getting ready, he thinks, to end it all . . . he figures he is cavalry too and starts up the ladder . . . he gets cracked on the head from the Cop coming down for his Christian Concern . . . Tomboy is still up there, fat mouthing.

DONT POKE OUT YOUR MOUTH MISTER  
YOUR FOLKS FORECLOSED ON MY AIR CONDITIONER  
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME MISTER  
I AINT LEAPING IM LEANING  
I DIG THE BREEZE  
THIS IS THE COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN

Country stumbles back down to the street and discovers his suitcase is gone. The Pimp, Junebug and the Junkie had scrimmaged for it as soon as the Samaritan's back was turned . . . the Junkie won the scramble, grabbed the bag and split the scene. Country is caught in the undertow of the milling crowd during the evening-city-hustle, all jive and elbows. He looks around helplessly, hopelessly and running true-to-poor-form he asks the Pimp has he seen his suitcase . . . but Sweet Daddy is very very absorbed in the shape of his fingernails. . . . Country asks a black police officer, who gestures with his billy for him to move along. Nothing is as lonesome as a crowd with everybody belonging and looking like they're going to a destination, back and forth, up and down, bursts of laughter shooting up like flares, and shouting. . . . Suddenly in the crowd Country sees that special little down-home face . . . probably the thing that pulled him up to the big city in the first place. The face still has a trace of heaven but the body has gone over to the devil, all flashed out in a bright plunged-down gown with a shameless slit up the front of the bottom too.

He tries to talk her into coming back down home, he is willing to take her back. But the Hooker is just getting her first sip and is nowhere near getting her fill. One thing that can be said for Country, he's full of Christian Charity, charity is not to be smirked and laughed at, not when it's real and for Country it's probably real, it's a big step for him, if you stop to consider where he and his head are probably coming from . . . but the Hooker thinks she is hitting the big time and she aint nowhere near dying to repent and go back down home. Country holds out his hand and tries again but it's like trying to talk Cold Duck out of a stone.

WELL I TRIED TO TELL YOU  
THAT ALL THOSE OLD LIGHTS  
ORANGE AND GREEN AND SO ON  
THEY WERE HERE ALREADY  
SUGAR WHEN YOU GOT HERE  
THEY'LL STILL BE RIGHT HERE  
BABY WHEN YOU DONE GONE

The Crazy Old Scavenger Lady is pushing around her baby carriage . . . the Whiskeyhead is collapsed on a stoop.

WELL I TRIED TO TELL YOU

The Dude flashes his roll and the Pimp signals OK to Big Titties and she takes him upstairs to the crib . . . the Barmaid pours Missy a drink and suddenly everybody else has sort of disappeared. Country keeps singing at the Hooker.

AND THAT NEW SWEETIE MAN  
THAT YOU SWORE  
WAS A PERFECT GENTLEMAN  
NOW I SEE YOU UNDERSTAND  
NOW FINALLY YOU DONE PICKED UP  
ON WHAT Mr' SLICK  
WAS PUTTING DOWN

A fat man wanders onto the scene and goes up to the john.

WELL I TRIED TO TELL YOU

The Dude and Big Titties are in the bed getting it on.

AND ALL THEM FANCY DRESSES  
IN ALL THEM FANCY MAGAZINES  
THEM FANCY DRESSES THAT YOU SAW YOURSELF GROOVING IN

THEM FANCY DRESSES THAT YOU DREAMED ABOUT DOING IN  
LORD — I HOPE YOU GOT PLENTY OF THEM NOW  
BECAUSE BABY NOW THATS ALL YOU GOT

The Cop comes in and starts rapping with the Barmaid and Missy.

WELL I TRIED TO TELL YOU

Fatso is upstairs in the toilet getting ready to shave.

THE WORLD AINT ALL THAT HIGH  
I DONE TRIED TO TELL YOU  
THE WORLD AINT ALL THAT NEW  
I DONE TRIED TO TELL YOU  
THE WORLD AINT ALL THAT TRUE  
WELL I TRIED TO TELL YOU  
YOU TOLD ME YOU WAS GONNA BACK UP  
BACK UP TO GET YOURSELF A RUNNING START  
BACKING UP — IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL IT  
I CALL IT — WELL ANYWAY  
I DONE TRIED TO TELL YOU

Junebug signals for Tomboy to come on down and sit by him . . . a burst of laughter from the bar . . . Fatso lathering . . . the Pimp and Pig are talking shop . . . Big Titties and the Dude are smoking and Country is pleading and holding his girl's hand.

HALF OF THEM FOLKS DONT KNOW WHERE ITS HALF AT  
I DONT FIGURE NONE OF EM KNOWS WHERE IT REALLY IS  
LISTEN TO EM LAUGH  
LISTEN TO EM LAUGH  
TELL ME DOES THAT MAKE YOU WANT TO LAUGH TOO  
TELL ME SUGAR  
WHATS IT SOUND LIKE TO YOU  
SOUND LIKE THE GRAVEDIGGER DONT IT  
SOUND LIKE THE GRAVEDIGGER DONT IT

Tomboy is sitting above Junebug on the stairs combing his hair . . . the Hooker pulls her hand away and runs off from Country and he looks after her and imagines her hell and damnation.

WELL I DONE TRIED TO TELL YOU

Fatso glares at himself in the toilet mirror, Country isn't the only one with heart trouble it seems. . . . No sooner does Country stop his song than Fatso goes into his . . . he slaps on some more lather and starts that if-I-had-of-shit, telling himself what a fool he's been.

LOOK AT YOURSELF  
YOU BIG UGLY MULE-FACE MULE  
YOU GOT THE NERVE  
TO TRY AND CRY

Sure the community toilet has no time for what the Chinese call autocriticism, but sometimes a soul has just absolutely gotta squeeze itself out a corner to breath in, yeah but there can be a hell of a difference between Gotta and Get, between what a soul, especially a soul with a poor fat black owner has just absolutely gotta have and what it ends up getting. A very impatient call-of-nature line is beginning to form . . . a cat with his washing-him-self-up stuff over his arm bangs on the toilet door . . . Fatso yells thru the door at him,

MAN WOULD YOU GET AWAY FROM THAT DOOR  
IM IN HERE NOW I AINT THROUGH

Junkie has got himself three shirts to sell, trying to make a little change . . . the Dude buys one and the Cop comes along and confiscates the other two.

DONT YOU BLINK  
YOU LOOK STRAIGHT BACK AT ME  
AND YOU GOT THE NERVE  
TO HAVE SOME KINDA  
CROCODILE TEAR IN YOUR EYE  
YOU SURE IS DUMB  
AINT NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL  
THEY SAY  
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT  
MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL  
YOU EVER SEEN A BIGGER FOOL THAN ME

The Block is heavy into its routine . . .

HOW COME SHE WENT AWAY

. . . Old Crazy Lady shifting her junk from shopping bag to baby carriage . . . the Cop making his rounds . . . up in the crib two hookers rapping . . . and in the john Fatso threatening himself with his straight razor.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL  
PUT THAT THING DOWN  
SHAVING IS ALL YOU GONNA DO  
YOU SHUCKING AND I KNOW IT

Fatso agrees with himself and puts the razor down, Soul-getting-some-breath-or-soul-not-getting-no-goddamn-breath, no need in killing yourself . . . the Drunk sneaks into the line to pee . . . the Lesbian is hitting on Missy, trying to get her to be her friend . . . Junebug is letting Country talk away his pain, the Pimp is with the Junkie . . . banging on the door . . . Fatso screams right back,

JUST A MINUTE I DONE SAID  
I'LL BE RIGHT OUT I DONE TOLD YOU

and returns to his grieving.

NINETEEN AINT ALL THAT YOUNG  
MAYBE IF I HAD GOTTEN A NEW 'CHINE  
I KNOW GOLDBERG WOULD HAVE STAKED ME  
GOOD AS I EVER BEEN  
CAN STILL SHAKE EM DOWN WITH ANYBODY

Fatso pours powder on his private part and Tomboy snatches Junebug's cap flirting with him. The Barmaid philosophizes with the Blindman and the Lesbian hits on Big Titties.

JUST CAUSE I DONT WANT TO ACT A FOOL ALL NIGHT LONG  
DONT MEAN I CANT  
I CAN  
SHE COULDA SAID-BYE DOG, THOUGH  
MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL  
YOU EVER SEEN A BIGGER FOOL THAN ME

The Junkie is nodding out . . . the Pimp gives himself a snort of cocaine.

HOW COME SHE WENT AWAY  
YOUNGSTERS JUST AINT GOT NO RESPECT  
FOR THEIR ELDERS THESE DAYS

Sunshine dressed up in his street clothes, featuring a stingy-brimmed hat and bermuda shorts, pacing up and down the curb trying to explain something to Missy without being overheard . . . poor in the ghetto anyway equals no privacy . . . some more banging on the toilet door . . . Fatso yells,

DAMMIT MAN THIS HERE TOILET  
DONT BELONG TO JUST YOU  
YOU KNOCK ON THIS DOOR  
ONE MORE TIME  
BEFORE IM THROUGH  
IM GONNA SHOW YOU WHAT KNOCKING CAN DO  
SURE IT DONT MEAN A THING  
IF IT AINT GOT THAT SWING  
BUT ANYBODY CAN FEEL POORLY  
FOR A MONTH OR TWO

Tomboy and Junebug are giggling together . . . the Pimp is eyeing them. Sunshine seems to be losing out both ways . . . the crowd is eavesdropping on everything he says and Missy dont seem to be paying him no never mind. Fatso goes on cutting up the clothes in the closet of his dreams.

SHE JUST WERENT NO GOOD  
CALLED EM CHIPPIES IN MY DAY  
FAST  
GONNA END UP ON FIFTY SEVENTH AND BROADWAY  
LONG AS YOUR TOOTER POINT DOWNWARD  
WHEN YOU WALK  
REMEMBER WHAT YOU SEE  
MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL  
YOU EVER SEEN A BIGGER FOOL THAN ME

Never again child, no lord here is her hand to heaven, let her sit up there on the bar stool like some fool until past quarter of eleven and not have the decency to put in one thin dime. Missy's bourgeois trip has gone out the window . . . she is mad mad mad at Sunshine and right there in the middle of the street she starts throwing a nigger fit on him.

DONT GO AWAY MAD  
DONT GO AWAY MAD, JUST GO AWAY  
NAW DONT GO AWAY MAD SUGAR  
NAW DONT GO AWAY MAD, JUST GO AWAY  
I AINT YOUR SWEETIE, SWEETIE  
I AINT YOUR SNOOKUMS NO MORE  
YESTERDAY YOU TOOK ME FOR SOME KIND OF POST TO PEE ON  
I DONT PLAY THAT HYDRANT GAME  
I DONT PLAY THAT HYDRANT GAME  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME

Missy whirls around and stomps away. Sunshine follows her, trying to explain . . . she turns on him wagging her fingers in his face . . . Junebug, Blindman and the Postal Clerk are sitting on a pipe over in the corner, cracking up.

NOW HERE YOU COME BACK FINGERPOPPING  
ALL TONIED UP CLEAN AS YOU CAN BE  
TWISTING AND SHIFTING DOWN THE GOOD TIMING TRAIL  
DETOUR MAN, IF YOU FIGURING ON ME  
DETOUR MAN, IF YOU FIGURE ON ME  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
GIVE YOU A LITTLE MORE TRUST AND TIME

Brother Bermuda tries hard to come on like he is laughing it off . . . the Drunk couldnt wait for Fatso no more and found himself a hallway and relieves his bladder . . . the time is Now for the Junkie and he is crouched down by his hiding place getting together his stash . . . Missy goes on yapping away with enough mouth for four more rows of teeth.

CHILD IS YOU OUT YOUR MIND  
I SURE WISH I HAD SOME OF THAT TEQUILA SOUR MONEY BACK I SPENT ON YOU  
THATS THE SAME PLEA THAT THE MAN COPS

SHOWS WHERE YOU AT, THE VERY SAME PLEA HE COPS  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
COMING DOWN LIKE SOME SEPIA CLARK GABLE  
SEND IN A SUB COACH IM STAYING ON THE BENCH  
IM BOYCOTTING YOUR BIG BUTT BABY  
I SEEN YOUR GAME, YOU TAKE THE CAKE, YOU WIN  
I SEEN YOUR BALL GAME ALRIGHT, BABY  
AND I CROWN YOU MISTER UNIVERSAL MONKEY WRENCH  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME

Missy brings it right down home to the footlights, yelling directly out into the audience, letting the world know . . . Sunshine is trying to figure out how to shush her down but she just keeps getting more angry . . . Junebug and the Postal Clerk take turns explaining the action to Blindman . . . the three of them roll around on the bench signifying and splitting their guts. Missy's nigger fit keeps steaming.

GOD DONT LIKE UGLY  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
ME NEITHER YOU DIG  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
GOD AND ME WE DONT LIKE UGLY WAYS  
COME RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
YOU WANT TO BE MY FRIEND  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
HOW COME YOU ALWAYS COME OUT HOLDING THE GOLD PLATED HANDLE  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME

Sunshine flashes her the peace sign, trying to get her to slow her roll . . . the Junkie is working on doing his thing . . . Missy is swinging her bag and stomping around . . .

Shit, no one has got it harder than a black woman . . . she has got to be the man but come on like a woman . . . take care of other folks' babies and raise her own . . . get humped by Captain in the kitchen and put up with them Sunshines, who dont even think enough to put in one cotton-picking dime to call and say he aint coming instead of letting her sit there.

AND I ALWAYS COME OUT HOLDING THAT STICKY BROWN END  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
LET THE DOORKNOB HIT YOU WHERE THE GOOD LORD SPLIT YOU  
COME RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
I DONT WANT IT  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
YOU KEEP IT  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
ANYWAY YOU GREW IT SO IT BELONGS TO YOU  
COME RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME  
YOU RIPPED IT FOR THE LAST TIME MAN  
RAISING YOUR LEG ON ME

Missy raises her ass for him to kiss as a last defiant gesture before she stomps up the steps. Up in the crib, the Pimp and Big Titties are arguing about the take. He says she has come up short . . . her answer is pretty lame, she poormouths the weather . . . an excuse to a Pimp isnt like a port in a storm — just any old one wont do . . . Sweet Daddio lets her know it to.

RAIN — THAT SURE IS LAME  
YOU MUST FIGURE I STONE LOST MY BRAIN

The Block has the stillness of that quiet before the storm. The Junkie is sitting on one of the stoops and the Drunk is sitting on one of the steps.

## YOU MUST FIGURE IM STONE INSANE

He throws her up against the wall. The band gets into a funky groove behind the action . . . she starts to plead and scream, the guitar becomes her voice, writhing, screeching.

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

He takes her purse and starts going through it, piece by piece, for the money . . . finally he just empties everything on the floor.

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

Big Titties scrambles around on her hands and knees, trying to pick up her things. The Pimp figures she is just pulling a game, trying to prove her innocence with humility . . . he snatches her by the hair like he's trying to remove her head, but instead her pink afro wig just comes off in his hand . . . he throws it down and hits her. For a moment she tries fighting back, then she starts pleading, screaming and proclaiming her innocence . . . the Pimp never misses a stroke in his ass-kicking . . . he whips her out the door, down the steps, over the Drunk, and into the street.

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

Everybody comes running, even the Junkie comes out of his stupor and picks up the shawl she dropped . . . he tries to hand it to her but she's too busy trying to beg off the blows.

Of all street shows, a fight is at the top of the list, in second place comes a beating, a wreck is ninety percent epilogue, a suicide ninety percent prologue, but a fight is all nitty gritty, and a beating is just one notch under that, a beating after all is nothing but a lopsided fight, and a fine big-titted mare to boot, getting her ass kicked thrown into the bargain, is a delightful delicacy . . . Everybody is gathered around digging the scene . . . the Lesbian is watching from upstairs with her thumbs hooked in her pants pockets . . . The Pimp hits Big Titties in the stomach . . . brothers start taking bets . . . the Cop strolls on the scene to check out the disturbance to the peace. The Pimp gives him the all-cool sign and he strolls away . . . as long as Sweet Daddy, his big tipper, is happy everything is OK, far be it from him . . . the crowd groans and oohs and aahs with the action. The Pimp's niggerfit and Missy's arent the same, but it's not the bread with him either, it's the principle of the thing. Part of the Pimp probably has a heavy heart about kicking her ass, no businessman likes to damage his uninsured property . . . but human nature, the way he sees it, is dogs over a bone . . . so what else can he do, even if she ends up half-dead. If she got away with it, he would be out of business before God Himself could get the news . . . the crowd understands what the head-whipping is about, too . . . He rips off the top halter part of her outfit . . . all the guys crowd in closer . . . Junebug leaps on the car frame to get an unobstructed view and the Old Scavenger Lady shuffles through into the circle and picks up the bra, clutches it to her heart and shuffles off again with another piece for her collection.

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

The Pimp reaches down and grabs himself a handful of big fine tit and squeezes hard . . . the air hurtles from the Hooker's throat in one piercing scream . . . she flops around on the street, gasping and pleading . . . Junkie challenges the Pimp to pick on somebody his own style and tries to square off at him . . . Pimp starts over for him, but the community forms a wall between them to protect the Junkie and pulls him away . . . there is a theory about junkies not seeing too clearly, especially the road of their destruction in dope. If anything he sees too clearly, especially how the deck of life is stacked . . . who wants to look down a long road of people tromping on your toes? . . . Some people are sensitive about life walking on his jams . . . this sensitivity is nothing but a liability if you are on the poor-man end of the stick and that goes triple if your skin is black. While the Pimp's back is turned Country, as dumb as ever, tries to pull Big Titties off to safety, and gets scratched and bit and kicked at for his pains. . . . The Pimp turns around and goes back to kicking ass, he doesnt even give her points for loyalty . . . his strategy is simple, he has got to kick her ass so bad that even if she has the bread and doesnt come across, people wont think she's cool, but a fool . . . a Goddamn fool honey to take all that head-whipping for no half of a dime. He throws her down again and she screams, he hisses . . .

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

The Postal Clerk takes out a five-dollar bill and waves it under the Pimp's nose and then tosses it on the ground by the girl. . . . The Pimp sizes him up for a moment, then picks up the bread . . . the Whore starts to get up and he takes his heel and shoves her back down . . . instead of putting the money into his vest pocket, he flourishes the green, then rams it into the Blindman's cup . . . OOWEEee, the crowd gasps its approval at such an elegant, suave badass gesture. The Blindman cant figure out what's going on. He takes the bill out of the can and stands there fingering it . . . it's one thing losing a battle of

style and it's another thing losing your bread so the Postal Clerk snatches his five dollars back out of the Blindman's hands.

## YOU GOTTA BE HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

Sweet Daddy has laid Big Titties half out. She's just coming to. . . . He takes off his belt with the metal buckle that will mark her up for life. . . . She cant go any further, she's at the end of her rope. Desperate, aching, bruised, and shaking, she raises her hand up in the classic plea for mercy. The Pimp raises the belt over his head to hit her . . . the game is up up up, so she reaches down in her drawers and takes out the five dollars and holds it up to him. . . . He takes the bread and smiles and bends down to help her to her feet.

SEE THERE — SEE

I KNEW YOU WAS HOLDING OUT FIVE DOLLARS ON ME

Once more the universe, as the Pimp sees it anyway, is as it should be. Another Hooker pulls up with his chariot and the Pimp brushes off his hat and gets in . . . the cop sidles up, his back is turned but his hand is out, and the Pimp lays his cut on him . . . Big Titties throws back her head and puts on her shawl and struts over to the Pimpmobile-cum-chromium-plated Chariot . . . and with one girl pulling and one pushing, Sweet Daddio rides off like a king.

Night falls . . .

A corner of the Block crystallizes into a bar . . . the Drunk peers in hopefully . . . one glare from the Barmaid, who looks up from behind the counter, and he evaporates.

Maybe it's only an illusion played by the darkness, even then, surely, at best only a tiny interlude, but anyway, somehow for a moment the Block seems to become that mama to every motherless child . . . probably the explanation is simply that bad takes more time than good to get its eyes adjusted to the dark and get into action. Fatso is sitting in the bar drinking, trying to let his soul catch his breath . . . the Barmaid shuffles her bottle and looks over at him. Poor ole black people always got to be dealing in reality, not that they dont love daydreams and cotton candy like the other side of the tracks, it's not a matter of choice, it's just that reality has a way of always catching up to poor niggers, it just grabs you at the base of the neck, crossing over with the opposing arm held horizontally to the movement and then shifting the weight from the ball of the ladder foot to the heel of the former and flipping you on your black ass. One of the first lessons a blood must get together is how to roll with the impact of the concrete of life. People being people, a lot of folks try to escape the impact of life on their ass by shoving someone else under themselves to cushion the Wham. You see, love is this wonderful ocean and the tender valentine sentiments people have are the fish. Fatso's sentiments have been yanked out of the ocean by the hook and line of that young no-good fast chick, onto the pile of the rest of the misplaced dreams. His soul is gasping and flipping, flopping on the pier of reality. The Barmaids soul is on the pile on the pier, too, polluting up the humanity . . . long ago her soul resigned itself to never being tossed back into that wonderful ocean of love. . . . She dries some more glasses, shuffles some more bottles, pouring Fatso his new drink then, half to herself and half to him, tells it like it is.

LOVE

YEH YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT YEH

LOVE LOVE LOVE

ON THE IDIOT BOX IN THE HEADLINES

GO AHEAD GO AHEAD THEY SAY

LOVE IS THE POST OF SOCIETY

FINALLY YOU SAY OK

LATER YOU COME TO BROKEN-HEARTED

SWEARING

TO A LOT OF THINGS — RIGHT

ANYWAY — LIKE THEY SAY

LOVE AINT THE ONLY L IN THE DICTIONARY

THEY GO SOME MORE — RIGHT

L LIKE IN LEARN, BUT YOU NEVER DO

THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHERS TOO — RIGHT

Fatso drinks his margarita. . . . In the dim light back in a stair-well of a hallway the Crazy Old Lady is changing and rearranging her clothes . . . Tomboy is sitting with Junebug on the steps . . . she is combing his hair with gentle strokes of an afro comb . . . the Barmaid sings her song.

L LIKE IN LOOK, LIKE IN LOOK DOWN ON THE CROWD  
LIKE YOU DID WHEN SHE WAS HANGING ON YOUR ARM  
L LIKE IN LEFT, LIKE A BEATUP SHIP LEFT IN THE STORM  
LIKE I BET YOU FEEL NOW THAT SHE AINT AROUND  
NO YOU DONT HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT FOR ME BABY  
ANYHOW THEY ALWAYS SAY WHAT WILL BE WILL BE  
ANYHOW FINISH YOUR MARGARITA, MISTER  
ANYHOW WHAT CAN YOU DO ANYWAY — RIGHT

On the perch high above the Block there is something with a huge white head, beady greedy eyes, a merciless mouth and big hands . . . Fatso nods yes to the Barmaid without moving . . . he studies rings on the table from his old glass and takes his new drink . . . the Blindman comes tapping in from stage left . . . he finds his landmark, the lamp-post, and then computes out where the stoop must be and backs over and sits down . . . Big Titties limps upstairs to the crib and flops on the bed. . . . Back in the doorway the Crazy Old Lady is twirling and caressing her rags like a debutante going to her ball. . . . The Waitress goes on running it down to Fatso . . .

L LIKE IN LACK OF IMAGINATION  
L LIKE IN LANDSLIDE, LIKE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE YOU BE IN  
L LIKE IN LOSE, LIKE — LOOK WHO'S TELLING WHO  
L LIKE IN LEARN, LIKE I SAID, BUT YOU NEVER DO  
I BEEN DOWN THAT ROAD COUPLE OF TIMES TOO  
ANYHOW THEY ALWAYS SAYING WHAT WILL BE WILL BE  
ANYHOW WORK ON YOUR STINGER A LITTLE, MISTER  
ANYHOW WHAT CAN YOU DO ANYWAY — RIGHT

Up on the perch, the figure has its arms outstretched and the fingers of its huge white hands are flexing greedily calling, calling . . .

I KNOW I KNOW  
A CHICK'S SOFT LAUGH AROUND THREE IN THE MORNING  
I KNOW I KNOW  
THE SUN PUSHING DOWN MAKING THINGS GROW  
I KNOW I KNOW  
THE SILENCE IN THE DAWN WHEN A CAR GOES PAST  
I KNOW I KNOW

The country Hooker in her orange dress is turning in after a hard night . . . she walks down the street and goes on up the steps.

TALKING ABOUT THE DAWN, MISTER  
IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME YOU KNOW  
IT WAS ABOUT THAT TIME A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO  
COME ON MISTER, DRINK YOUR COFFEE  
ANYHOW WHAT CAN YOU DO ANYWAY  
LIKE THE MAN SAID, WHAT WILL BE WILL BE  
ABOUT THE ONLY TIME THE MAN EVER SPOKE  
WITHOUT FORKED TONGUE ANYWAY

The Lesbian is in the crib comforting Big Titties . . . she has a bowl of water and mends Big Titties' cuts and bruises with little dabs of a sponge. . . . Fatso gets up slow and pays for his drinks and goes out . . . a wee bit more ahead of the game than when he came in simply because some time has been passed . . . time, the last ally against forgetting those seething moments of pain . . . time, humiliatingly slow but pure . . . the Barmaid sums it up,

SERA SERA JIM

The eyes of badness have become accustomed to the darkness of the night . . . the Pimp strolls in and looks around casually . . . the Block is almost deserted . . . the coast is clear, he takes out his bank roll and clips it to the clothesline and reels it up to the beckoning hands of the figure with the beady eyes and self-righteous mouth on the perch. . . . The hands fondle the money. . . . Sweet Daddy starts a new mission, he walks over to the steps where Tomboy and Junebug are flirting . . . he

smiles up at Tomboy and brings a box with a ribbon from behind his back . . . he opens the box and gives her a glimpse of expensive-looking shoes, silver ones, the kind hookers wear. . . . She hesitates . . . he holds up the box again . . . the Tomboy stands up, Junebug tries to stop her . . . the Pimp beckons to her and she comes down the steps to him . . . the Pimp and his new recruit start off. . . . Junebug jumps to his feet, the Pimp turns and stares at him, Junebug doesn't back up but he doesn't come forward either, he just stands up there with his fists clenched . . . the Pimp guides Tomgirl away to her new life . . . the Barmaid rings up her sale . . . the bell in the cash register tinkles the silence and the figure on the perch has taken the bread and disappeared . . .

Missy stands at the curb waiting for the red light to turn green . . . the Postal Clerk comes struggling up with two shopping bags of groceries and stands waiting for the light, too . . . the Fag comes down the street and passes the stoop where the Blindman is sitting. He pauses and shifts his weight back and forth sashaying himself and his perfume around. . . . The Blindman takes a few steps after her, trying to follow the scent . . . he has such a big beautiful smile on his face, so open and unguarded, as only a child or a blind person's smile can be, it's uncomfortable even to see, it's as if you're spying. The Blindman hears new footsteps approaching . . . it's his old running buddy Junebug passing by . . . he beckons and reaches out and pats his pal, like blind people like to do. The Blindman's bursting with joy and he starts to run the whole thing down to his buddy, about the love that grew and grew until it's a song in his heart . . .

HEY BABY AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU  
CATCH THAT ON THE CORNER  
SHE PASSED THIS WAY A MOMENT AGO  
SHES PROBABLY TALL AND WEARING  
SOMETHING COOL MAYBE GREEN  
DO YOU SEE HER  
RAP TO ME

Junebug looks down to the corner but he can't figure things out, the only woman he sees is Missy clutching her pocketbook with both hands in the anti-purse-snatching fashion of the ghetto and it couldn't be her anyway because she's coming toward them and the Blindman said she just went past. . . . He can't figure it out, there's just her and a couple of guys standing next to her with both arms full of shopping bags and behind him a country dude with his head in a newspaper, plus a tall Fag with hot pants facing them. . . . The Blindman is eager for a description of his princess charming.

COME ON BABY, WHAT YOU SEE  
THAT LIGHT DONT CHANGE FAST YOU KNOW  
START FROM THE TOP AND GO TO THE TOE  
NATURAL OR COMB OR CONKELEEN  
WHATS ON THE CORNER  
COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME

The light turns yellow . . . Funky Girl the Faggot throws a glittering smile over her shoulder at the Blindman and Junebug . . . the light begins to go on in Junebug's head. . . . The Country Dude is eating chicken as he reads the paper . . . the Blindman keeps pressing his old running buddy for a description.

SHES YOUNG — RIGHT  
I COULD TELL  
SHE UGLY  
DONT MATTER A DAMN TO ME, I GUESS  
JUST CURIOSITY  
COME ON BABY, WHAT YOU SEE

The light turns green . . . the people cross . . . Country bumps into Funky Girl and looks up from his reading and chewing to see what he has run into . . . Funky Girl gives him her most provocative come-and-get-it smile. Country stares, he can't even figure out what the damn thing is. Up in a room the Junkie is holding his head and for the moment the Blindman has stopped pressing his old-time running buddy for details. Instead, like all lovers since time began, he starts talking about the wonderfulness of his loved one and love love love . . .

VOICES ARE MY THING  
OFFERED HER A PENCIL ONCE AND CHEWING GUM  
SHOULD'A HEARD HER SAY NO THANK YOU  
LOW AND WARM LIKE ALAGA SYRUP

MOLASSES TO A COUNTRY BOY LIKE YOU  
COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME

The Old Crazy Lady sinks down in a corner and huddles there . . . Funky Girl goes upstairs, which has also become around the corner, flitting around doing little feminine things, powdering and wiggling and chewing gun and stuff, and the Blindman pours his heart out to Junebug.

ARE YOU HIP TO WHAT YOU SEE ON THE CORNER  
THATS THE BITCH OF MY DREAMS JIM  
AND YOU KNOW WHAT IM GONNA DO  
PERFUMES MY THING TOO  
AND SHE LAYS IT ON  
IM GONNA MAKE MY MOVE  
IN A DAY OR TWO  
MY PENCIL PEDDLING DAYS ARE ALMOST THROUGH  
NOW THAT I ALMOST GOT THAT DIPLOMA  
NOW THAT I ALMOST GOT THAT JOB DOWNTOWN AND DOG  
THAT GOOD OFAY JOB DOWNTOWN  
THIS IVORY CANE HAS ITS ADVANTAGES TOO  
LIKE I SAID I'LL MAKE MY MOVE  
IN A DAY OR TWO  
SHE DRINKS BEER DURING THE WEEK  
SHES ALONE YOU DIG AND LONELY  
DRINKS GIN ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY  
NEVER HEARD HER STAGGER THOUGH  
WHATS ON THE CORNER, JIM  
COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME

Junebug doesn't know what to do, the Blindman keeps running it down to him Jim, keeps on running it down Jim, but it aint a her, motherfucka-Junebug-screams in his head — it's a him . . . it's a him, it's a it, it's a punk, it's a faggot, here but the sound dont pass Junebug's lips somehow . . . and the Blindman keeps going on with that unprotected innocent smile lighting up his face, begging and bragging and dancing and describing.

TO THE LEFT IS WHERE SHE HANGS AROUND  
PROBABLY UP AT OREES  
HEAR THE BARS GOT A NEW OWNER  
WE'LL GO DANCING AND EVERYTHING  
BEULHAS BOY BEEN SHOWING ME  
COME ON BABY WHAT YOU SEE  
PICK UP ON THIS STEP JIM  
DONT KNOW WHY I WAITED SO LONG  
BEULHAS BOY SAYS IM A NATURAL  
WHATS ON THE CORNER  
COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME  
SPEAK UP MAN OR SOMETHING  
WHATS SHE WEARING DRESS OR SKIRT

The Junkie is sitting on the chair in the room upstairs having chills, Junebug is trying to hip the Blindman. The Junkie rubs himself frantically, trying to get warm . . . Junebug manages to say "pants" but the Blindman doesn't get the message.

PANTS — MUST BE THE STYLE  
BUT I'LL STOP ALL THAT WHEN  
SHES MY WOMAN  
COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME  
TALL, SHORT, FAT, SKINNY  
RAP TO ME  
YOU GOT LOCKJAW OR SOMETHING  
THE CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE OR SOMETHING  
GIVE ME ALL THE DETAILS

COME ON BABY, RAP TO ME

Junebug tries to lay a pinch of the happenings on him, the brother is sharp and would normally pick up . . . but just like anybody else caught up in doing his fantasy, the Blindman wont see . . . Junebug tells him there is only one important detail.

AIN'T BUT ONE DETAIL

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN

YOU SOME NEW KIND OF COMIC OR SOMETHING

WHAT THAT CRAP SUPPOSED TO MEAN

COME ON, JUNEBUG

YOU SUPPOSED TO BE MY FRIEND

The Blindman gropes for Junebug, he grabs him . . . he starts to shake him, pleading and yelling. The Junkie has gone so cold his whole body is chattering, he rubs himself frantically. The Blindman wasnt always blind, he and Junebug and the boys was running buddies, werent they, werent they? He shakes Junebug. Junebug doesnt do a thing. How can you hip a pal, one that saved your ass anyway, especially after he has let it all hang out . . . when he's got his head in the clouds and everything . . . who has got the heart to put his feet in some stone cold news . . .

REMEMBER WHEN THE SHIT HIT THE FAN

AND THE MAN WANTED TO KNOW WHICH WAY YOU RAN

AND QUESTIONED ME TILL I COULDNT SEE

I STOOD BY YOU, JUNEBUG

COME ON BABY STAND BY ME

COME ON BABY DONT PLAY

BE MY EYES FOR ME HE TOOK AWAY

QUIT KIDDING JUNEBUG

IM SWEARING TO GOD IT AINT FUNNY

BABY COME ON IN

YOU ACTING AS BLIND AS ME

All Junebug can bring himself to do by way of an answer is to take the change out of his pocket and drop it into the Blindman's cup. The Blindman is startled by the noise and lets go and Junebug escapes . . . the Blindman gropes for him pathetically but Junebug runs away. The Junkie has a sudden craving for water and tears out of his hole and down the steps . . . the Crazy Lady just looks at them . . . the Blindman yells after Junebug . . .

RAP BROTHER

RAP

WHAT YOU SEE STANDING THERE ON THE CORNER

SPEAK UP OR SOMETHING

COME ON BABY RAP TO ME

COME ON BABY RAP TO ME

The street is dark and empty, not really empty, but in a way. The Junkie is still slopping from a hose in the corner and the Fag is still upstairs twisting and the Blindman is screaming stage center echoing his soul . . .

COME ON BABY RAP TO ME

But anyhow things move on and the Blindman's cry has hardly faded before an usher comes in carrying a chain and stand . . . he sets it up in the corner and stands behind it . . . it's movie time. The Pimp looks like he might lay some of that good stuff on the Junkie and the Junkie follows him off the scene. The usher folds his arms officially . . . a white couple crosses the street and gets in line. . . . A nice black bourgeois couple joins the line too, you can tell they are bourgeois by the big hat she's wearing and the pocket-book she's carrying. The Drunk appears, he bows and scrapes and follows them, trying to hustle himself that dime . . .

GOOD EVENING MISTERS LADIES, PEACE, PRAISE GOD

A BLESSING UNTO THE RACE

SPEAKING OF LOVE AND PEACE AND GOD

WOULD YOU MIND SHOWING

A LITTLE CHRISTIAN KINDNESS TO ME

I COULD SURE USE A TASTE  
YOU SEE

The Dude with the green scarf is heading for the cinema too when the Drunk spots him and switches begs, he backtracks and tries to intercept the Dude . . . he nudges him to get his attention, he coughs in his face . . . is it a whiskey head's mistake, bad manners, or part of a poor-sick-man con?

OH I DONT HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE  
I GOT A BAD HEART SO IT AINT FOR ME, NOT REALLY  
ASK A DOCTOR HE'LL TELL YOU IM A SERIOUS CASE  
COME ON BRER, HELP ME GET THAT TASTE  
ITS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY  
YOU SEE

The tramp trails the Dude along the line . . . everybody reels back from his general funk and breath. He notices and reassures them,

DONT JUMP FOLKS  
TAKE THEM LOOKS OFF YOUR FACE  
I AINT ONE OF THEM DOPE ADDICTS  
THATS A TEENY BOPPER BAG  
WHO EVER SEEN A JUNKIE AS OLD AS ME  
I JUST WANT MY TASTE  
YOU SEE

He makes a tour of the line with palm out about once a verse . . . but his rap still doesnt work . . . he keeps changing angles.

MY STORYS SAD AINT IT, BELIEVE YOU ME  
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOUR SYMPATHY  
HAVE A LITTLE PITY  
WATCHA SAY FOLKS, YOU GOT A LITTLE BOOST FOR ME  
WATCHA SAY FOLKS HOW BOUT THAT  
OK — NAW HUNH  
I SEE I SEE

The drunk gives everybody another shot of the old halitosis . . . the Crazy Lady sits on the stoop rubbing her legs . . . the Wino is aching mighty bad. His voice goes tender . . . tender for his rap, anyway.

WHAT WOULD YOU ALL SAY, WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT  
IF I TOLD YOU THAT A WOMAN USED TO BELONG TO ME  
A SWEET AND GENTLE WOMAN WITH LIPS OF HONEY  
THAT DO THE TRICK  
PLEASE LAY A LITTLE CHANGE ON ME  
OK — NAW HUNH  
I SEE I SEE

Maybe they are a bunch of patriots or something. He glances up at the marquee but he cant see that far and he doesnt dare ask the usher who, using his big-time offical standing, is just aching to get at him. The Drunk begins marching and saluting . . . it's already a miracle how the oversize shoes stay on his feet when he is just walking, let alone marching . . . but he marches and his shoes stay with him, held on by pure toe jam.

AND WAR YOU EVER HAD YOUR NOSE RUBBED IN THAT  
COME ON BOYS WE'RE MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY  
AND OUR FAMOUS VICTORY MIXTURE  
YOU EVER BEEN DOWNWIND AND HAD A WHIFF OF THAT  
OIL AND FEAR AND PALM AND BARBECUED JAP  
ABOUT THAT TASTE FOLKS LAY A LITTLE CHANGE ON ME  
OK — NAW HUNH  
I SEE I SEE

A drunk is among the most diabolical motherfuckers one can confront in a street situation. He is not like a junkie, who knows that as soon as he cops the bread for a fix he will be able to get off entirely from the whole world. No matter how high a man gets on alcohol he is still immensely aware of his frailties and stupidities. He still knows what he is doing and he realizes moreover that his behavior is a drag to people around him. The drunken tramp stands before the crowd, nasty, despicable, uncool. What is most frightening about a drunk is that sixth sense that gives him the ability to rip the clothes off other people's minds, to force others to strip their feelings down to the emotional bones. The drunk makes us look at what it feels like to be without shame, without manners, without caring what or who anybody thinks we are. When most of us arrive at this sense we reject it because it brings us face to face with something ugly in ourselves.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY

IF I TOLD YOU ABOUT A BUDDY WHO WASNT A BUDDY BUT A CAT JUST USING YOU  
AND A WOMAN TOO SWEET, TOO GENTLE, WITH A MOUTH TOO FULL OF HONEY  
THATS ALWAYS GOOD FOR A GRIN ANY DAY THAT THE LORD SENDS  
ANY DAY AINT IT THATS ALWAYS FUNNY  
COME ON FOLKS WHATCHA SAY  
OK — NAW HUNH  
I SEE I SEE

The three or four black folks in the line seem to have a conspiracy brewing . . . something is very funny, they have a little huddle going, chuckling and nodding. The drunk has sunk down to his last angle or maybe it's been the plain truth all the time . . . he begs and pleads.

PLEASE

PRETTY PLEASE IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON  
A GLASS OF ANYTHING  
MUSCATEL SHERRY BLOODY MARY  
HEAT BEER BRANDY GIN  
PRETTY PLEASE YOU SEE THE FIX IM IN  
PRETTY PLEASE FOLKS ANYTHING WILL DO

The bourgeois man goes over and whispers in the Wino's ear . . . the Wino nods okay and bursts into a smile.

A GLASS OF H-TWO-O

OK IM GAME — WHATS THAT ANYWAY

Everybody starts cracking up at the joke, the white folks, the black folks, the usher . . . they try to keep their faces straight so as not to spoil the gag but their sides are splitting. The bourgeois guy whispers the answer in the Wino's ear. The Wino is stunned.

WATER!!

Suddenly he realizes everybody is laughing at him. He glares at them, then for a moment he seems to go along with the joke.

FUNNY, THATS FUNNY FOLKS, BRAVO

But sometimes a body can just plain get tired of people treating you mean, even a bum. The drunk turns funky . . . he squats down and puts a hand back through his spraddled legs and points a finger directly at his bunghole so that there wont be any confusion about what he means to say.

SUCK OUT OF MY ASS WITH A STRAW  
YOU TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OUTA ME

The laughing shit stops immediately. . . . The folks pull back, but brother Wino isnt through, he slips them in the dozens too, for good measure . . .

YOUR DADDYS BREATH SMELLS LIKE WILD OX FARTS  
YOUR SISTER GOT SO MANY WRINKLES ON HER FAT BELLY  
SHE GOTTA SCREW ON HER DRAWERS  
YOU'LL NEVER BE THE MAN YOUR MAW WAS  
AND GENERAL MACARTHUR WAS A FIGHTING MAN

HE DID IT TO YOUR . . .

Somebody in line throws some change to him, the money hits the ground with that pleasant tinkle . . . the Wino stops dead in the middle of his rhyme . . . once again he is all scraping and bowing and compliments . . .

EXCUSE ME

EXCUSE ME LADIES AND GENTLEMEN EXCUSE ME

THANK YOU KINDLY

I COULD TELL RIGHT AWAY YOU FOLKS WAS ELITE

IT SHOWS A MILE AWAY FIRST THING YOU SEE

He starts off and about halfway across the street he stops and waves.

GOODNIGHT MISTERS LADIES

PEACE AND PRAISE GOD

From "praise God" to "Goddamn" . . . the Wino's last blessing is echoed in the night by "God Bless The Child . . ." as an unlikely group bursts out of the bar, as though the bar itself could no longer stomach them, and had heaved them up. It's Funky Girl, the Fag, in complete drag and looking good. Sure her eyelashes are a bit too long, her shoulders a bit too wide, but that russet wig is a comer, her tight green bodice has a plunging neckline that works, her armpits are shaved and those great long legs are shaved too and have been vaselined for days, her thighs play beautiful games with that electric blue skirt hugging her buns, slit up the side too child Amen . . . like Judy Garland in that whatchamacallit film. She's as much woman as she wants to be, real as she feels.

But she's a woman in trouble. The Dyke who is following her is mad, bull mad. Did the fight start over who had the most white friends? Maybe whether the drag queen was more pussy than the Dyke was dick. Anyway the Dyke snatches off some of Funky Girl's curls, and it could get real physical. Now dont play Funky Girl cheap, she is young, strong and has a blade in her shoulder bag too, but tonight is about being a lady, and it's a lady who draws herself up in dignity and refuses to deal with such coarseness. It's Cleopatra who walks tall down Broadway with those garish neons flashing on her royal face. It's the Nefertiti of Lenox Avenue touring the provinces of the Broadway theater district, past movie houses, discount houses, massage houses, dance halls, past the high-wigged, high-skirted whores, fags, cops, pimps and gawking tourists of Broadway . . . as good as she knows she looks, she feels good. It's seldom enough that you feel good. She hums that good feeling . . .

SOMETIMES SOMETIMES I FEEL

Three whores pass, a snickering question in their eyes . . . if they mean to imply she has been in jail, they are wrong, she's been away playing tennis in Rio di Janiero.

DONT COME ASKING ME WHERE I BEEN

I BEEN VACATIONIN

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

THIS OLD MOTHERLESS BROADWAY

YOU BITCHES NOSE IS OPEN

CAUSE I GOT MORE WHITE MEN

ALL MINNESOTA TYPES TOO

The whores suck their teeth, mutter their three-syllable "shee-yee-it." Funky Girl tosses her head and moves on.

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE SUCH A FUNKY GIRL

She spots a midtown alley cat, a pussy as alone as she is.

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE SUCH A FUNKY GIRL

HERE HERE KITTY HERE KITTY

THERE JUST LOOK AT THOSE BIG EYES

ALL FULL OF SADNESS

SOMETIMES SOMETIMES I GET SO STONED

A cop, spotting her, gives her a light keep-moving hit on the rump with his nightstick. With all the whores there, why doesnt

he bother them?

PLEASE OFFICER PLEASE IM MOVING  
SHE DONT HAVE A LEASE  
ON THIS SIDEWALK OFFICER  
SHE CREATES THE HAVOC OFFICER  
IM A GIRL OF PEACE OFFICER

The Cop half-jokingly raises his nightstick and Funky Girl starts moving off with ladylike steps.

MAKE WAY YOU ALL IM COMING THROUGH

She tosses her curls and gives a parting shot to the hookers.

YOU CHILDREN SURE ARE TIRED

And sails on through the sea of flashing lights.

SOMETIMES SOMETIMES I FEEL SO SUPERFLUOUS.

"Superfluous" is held for all its worth, and means to her "fantastically full of well-being." Just the way she feels tonight Jesus . . . it's gonna be one of those nights child, she can just tell . . . aint there goose bumps on her fine shoulders? Maybe this is it coming now . . .

ALL THAT BEG DONT GET NONE  
THEM THAT DONT ASK DONT WANT NONE

The Dummy goes on past . . . he aint no brother he's just heavy.

LOVE FOR SALE BETTER SPREAD THAN DEAD SUGAR

Oh lord now let it be one of those nights, the lights twinkle full of promise.

MOTHERLESS OLD BROADWAY

Oh yes she's moving on . . . the Pimp strolls past with a new girl he's breaking in . . . he compliments Funky, just keeping his claws in practice. The Fag goes all squishy and she takes the cigarette he's smoking and does her fashion lady bit.

YES LOVE THANK YOU — WELL  
THEY SAY WHEN YOU GOT IT FLAUNT IT  
STYLE CHILD IS EVERYTHING

There's nothing like a pick-you-up to let you down . . . suppose it all comes to zero this evening.

SOMETIMES I FEEL SO ALL ALONE

No thats a naughty thought, she wont be blue . . . the Lesbian comes by waving and taunting her with the piece from her wig. That Dyke just better move on . . .

TWO-BIT HEPATITIS CARRYING TRICK  
DONT START ME TO READING

A rundown brother tries to hit on her for a little sex.

NO LORD — NOT EVEN IF YOU RUBBED SAINT JOHN HIMSELF  
ALL OVER IT

Another rundown brother goes wandering past . . . it's Fatso on a binge, he sure looks bad too . . . she tries comforting him in her way.

I AINT GONNA LIE — POORLY BABY POORLY

YOU BETTER GET YOURSELF SOME FRIEND  
TO START BURNIN SOME CANDLES FOR YOU  
ON THIS MOTHERLESS BROADWAY

Then it happens.

HELLO, HELLO, HELLO THERE

A sailor too . . .

IS THAT SMILE — YOU DID SMILE AT ME  
CONDESCENDING OR REAL  
HOW ABOUT AN ORANGE JULIUS  
HOW ABOUT A HOT DOG TOO

They are always so hungry. A hot dog stand with orangeade materializes. He's still just a growing boy, so blond too . . .

WITH OR WITHOUT SAUERKRAUT THERE — GOOD  
YOU SO YOUNG WHERE YOU FROM  
REALLY, THATS TOO FUNNY TO BE TRUE  
REALLY YOU MEAN REALLY

She can hardly believe the coincidence . . . she hands him his hot dog and drink and pays daintily.

DONT CON THATS NASTY  
THE ORANGE AND STUFF IS ON ME ANYWAY  
IS THAT TRUE, MINNESOTA — OH THATS FUNNY  
YOU'RE THE CREAM IN MY COFFEE

She takes him for a little stroll . . . away somewhere, you know, from all this hurly-burling . . .

THAT SOMEONE IM LONGING TO SEE  
JUST A LITTLE OLD FUNKY ME

Across from a schoolyard with broken basketball rings, "Dee-Dee loves Jack" and a hole kicked in the screen, they sit on the skeleton of a car. She likes him. She looks at her husband for the evening and sighs, she realizes already, unlike a lot of folks (sure like everyone else, she wants immortality and she tried more than a few times to get it that way), you cant leave imprints in the sands of time on a piece of poontang, but you gotta deal with the material of the material. Her bitchy flip brash mask drops away and she looks toward the river . . . she cant see it but she knows it's that way, all black and oily and wide. People need each other so much . . .

THE WORLD IS ALL SCABS AND BROKEN NEEDLES  
UNLESS SOMEONE CARES FOR YOU ANYWAY  
WE ONLY LIVE ONCE ANYWAY  
YOU KNOW WHAT BALLING IS  
ITS A POOT IN OLD DEATHS FACE  
ISNT THAT A GIGGLE  
I DO LIKE YOU A LOT ANYWAY

The sailor tries to reach in her breast . . . she brushes him away, then gives him a little love tap . . . she kisses his fingertips.

YOU'RE TERRIBLE TAKE MY HAND  
COME LETS GO TO MY PLACE  
AND SIT IN OLD DEATHS FACE  
JUST A FUNKY GIRL

They stand up. . . . The sailor wants to race.

YOU'RE CRAZY BUT OKAY  
IF YOU WANT

OKAY I'LL RACE YOU THERE

YOU TAKE A LEAD

I COULD BEAT YOU WITH HEELS ON ANYWAY

He runs off and she runs after him. The Crazy Old Scavenger Woman spots the piece of the Fag's wig that the Dyke snatched lying in the streets, she picks it up and puts it in her bag . . . Funky feels so wonderful she just cant help singing . . .

THIS OLD MOTHERLESS BROADWAY

The sailor turns into a dark alley. Normally she wouldnt go in there but . . . alright she just knows he's Okay, theres no danger, no naughty thoughts now. She plunges into the blackness calling after him.

HERE I COME

MOTHERLESS OLD BROADWAY

And if Funky Girl gets a bad time seeking love, how about too, them that get a bad time keeping love? How about finding something and having it taken away? When the man said about it being better to have loved and lost, you can bet he was winning at the time. Fortunately just for plain old sanity a body doesnt project disaster so good. Way back in the depression days most of the cats diving out of those twenty-story office-building windows did it because they had known hard times and couldnt face poverty again. Knowing what you're missing is a bitch, Jim. Thats why until recently suicide in niggers has always been slow, excluding of course the original Africans who jumped off the slave ship, who preferred death to losing that sweet freedom they had known. Now, every now and then, a token black bourgeois who doesnt realize that he really hasnt got something to lose, who thinks that fifteen percent equity in a bungalow really makes him the owner, might do something foolish but all in all suicide isnt the black way. . . . But still, to lose what you have just found is tough. As tough as hustling that dime in the street, tough as that jive numbers runner going to Florida on your bread when you hit, tough as your favorite smothered chicken dish getting all burned, tough as standing in front of the Womens House of Detention calling up to your woman all busted and gone . . .

HEY FOURTH FLOOR

HEY FOUR

FOUR

DOROTHY

She stares up. . . . All the windows of the jail are dark. A passerby would notice that the streetlight bounces off the wetlook vinyl jacket in a pretty way and would feel pleased within himself for having such a poetic observation . . . A passerby might notice the turned-up collar and the ducktail process too. . . . But noticing and understanding the slacks straining to look like pants and the flat-bosom bra squeezing tits into a chest, depends on where you going to, being at, and coming from. . . . A beacon comes on.

IS THAT YOUR LIGHT SUGAR

HOW THEY TREATING YOU SUGAR

A handsome face turned upwards . . . that universal look of a separated lover peering thru a fog of loneliness, straining to see that familiar loved face. The Dyke scans the barred windows, she shifts her position, maybe further away from the streetlamp, maybe the light is in her eyes. . . . Is that her, is that the same face, is that the same body whose cuts and bruises she sponged and gently salved when the Pimp, doing what he had to do, whipped her on the avenue. Is that the same face that finally lifted and turned to her with relief, then gratitude, then love? Is that my woman that I pulled from Sweet Daddy and made happy? Is that shadow her love?

MAKE ME SOME KIND OF SIGN SO I KNOW ITS YOU

CAUSE YOU SO FAR AWAY

DOROTHY

I MISS YOU

The fourth-floor light goes out and a match flares and there's the outline of that body. . . . Its her . . . I hope its her . . . maybe its her.

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

The man-woman far below dances to some sharp remembered rhythm of their lovemaking and Dorothy moves to that same

rhythm, to that same memory — to all their memories.

... What can she say . . . so far away.

GUESS WHAT

THEY GOT A NEW KINDA HAIR SPRAY

I KNOW YOUD DIG IT

YOU GOT A CAN WAITING

ON THE SHELF FOR YOU

SUGAR

IM WAITING TOO

It's got to be Dorothy. . . . Please let it be her. If she were in her arms she'd put quarters in the machine all night so the music would just wash them away into the ends of the earth.

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

She dances with herself . . . one hand flat for the small of Dorothy's back, the other extended à la Valentino for Dorothy's right hand. . . . She stops . . . she wails her love up to the window,

GUESS WHAT

ELVIN

THERESAS BOY

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT

HE TURNED TWO

I GAVE THE HATS OUT AT THE PARTY

I MISS YOU

That street is so far away and Dorothy aches so hard . . . the Dyke knows.

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

GUESS WHAT

IM GETTING ON MY FEET

I DID BIG RUDY A FAVOR

HES TAKEN A SHINE TO ME

HE GIVES ME A FEW LITTLE THINGS TO DO

THE PIGEON HAD AN EGG

I MISS YOU

The match goes out.

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

The desire to hold her honey overcomes the thing and she begins to dance again, pretending Dorothy is in her arms. Another match is lit . . . sure, it must be her and when she gets free they will never be separated again.

DOROTHY

YOU AINT NEVER GONNA FACE THE MAN AGAIN

COUNT ON ME

EVERYTHING IS GONNA BE COOL FOR YOU

IF HES STILL AROUND

FOR YOUR MONKEY TOO

I MISS YOU

Oh Jesus her sweet baby . . .

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

The Dyke dances again and Dorothy echoes it . . . you can almost hear their navels kissing. Only a dribble of humanity at such a late hour, a village fag maybe, a schoolteacher from Jersey left over from a weekend, stranded on the sands of

midweek and reality, cruising cynical white folks in police uniforms, hippies with rednecks smoking shit and driving around with the air conditioner off and the windows up, mobile scenery . . . the Dyke is oblivious to everything but her loved one . . . she is yelling, but it's a whisper really and the same old fundamentals . . . love-making protecting and hoping and dreaming,

GUESS WHAT  
WASHINGTON HALL GOT  
NEW KINDA LAMPS  
THEY BLINK AND CHANGE COLOR TOO  
THEY GOT A FEW NEW STEPS TOO  
THE SLOW STILL THE SLOW THOUGH

A love jones is a hurting thing.

I MISS YOU

And with four floors and six iron bars between them they embrace.

BABY IS YOU EVER GONNA COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME

And dance, anyway love isn't that often or that easy to come by. . . . When they were flying they were flying, a night full of quarters in the machine. . . . The first time they really got it on.

CAN YOU GUESS WHAT I DREAMED ABOUT US  
I GUESS YOU CAN  
YOU WAS OUT THE SLAM  
WE DIDNT EVEN WAIT FOR THE BUS  
WE RAN ALL THE WAY  
ITS READY AND WAITING SUGAR  
I MISS YOU

Dorothy clutches the bars straining to hear, her body screaming for her lover. Maybe the lamplight flickered, lamplights don't flicker it must be a tear slipping across her eye. . . . The voice floats up with those long sweet promises,

BABY IS YOU GONNA EVER COME BACK AND DANCE WITH ME  
YOU'RE SEEING YOUR LAST COOLER SUGAR  
YOU AINT NEVER GONNA GET STRUNG OUT ON A HUMBLE AGAIN SUGAR

Somebody's Sting Ray roars down the night.

I LOVE YOU

Traffic light changes, but there's no humanity, like a nut talking to himself.

I LOVE YOU

The Dyke puts her hands in her pocket and starts away. . . . She halts and screams back,

I LOVE YOU

Dorothy turns away because she can't bear to watch her until she's gone. One last glance up at the stone cold black window. The Dyke's vinyl jacket catches the light poetically as she passes under each lamp, bearing manfully the weight of her separated love down the street, and the night's gone . . .

For every night ending, excluding of course those ghetto dropouts lying dead, mugged, plugged or drugged, there is a morning. But morning on the Block is not that promise of renewal and rebirth that morning is supposed to be . . . morning is just the same old shit.

Sunshine comes out the alley with his vehicle for the day, what they call a garment district cadillac, just a plain old rolling clothes rack. Sunshine is all smiles as he pushes the pipe rack along and according to him he sure has a good reason to be . . .

. Sunshine is an optimist and he plays the black optimist game, the Numbers, sure almost every day that he's gonna win but this time its different he is super sure. He's grinning to himself, he hums . . . his feet hurt, but he doesnt mind, because he knows hurting feet will soon be far behind. He squints up at the sky and chuckles.

HEY HEH (CHUCKLE) GOOD MORNING SUNSHINE  
TAKE A GOOD SQUINT AT ME  
I AINT THE MAN I USED TO BE  
I AINT THE CAT YOU SAW YESTERDAY  
AT LEAST I MEAN BY TOMORROW I WONT BE ANYWAY  
WHOLE NEW BALLGAME — WHOLE NEW DAY  
BUG YOU DONT IT YOU OVERGROWN HEADLIGHT

Sunshine is onto something, something even better than those Sundays long ago when his mother's older sister got him dressed in his suit and sent him to church . . . He would have time to stop off at the livery stand-shoeshine parlor and watch ol Slim shine them up for a quarter, look at the popsicles in the window and still be in church a few minutes after nine . . .

I ASKED YOU FOR THE LAST TIME  
TO TELL MY WHY YOU SO UNKIND  
HOW MANY YEARS AND TIMES I ASKED YOU  
SINCE YOU BAKED US BLUE  
YOU DONT LOOK OUT FOR US MORE'N YOU DO  
CURIOS HUH CURIOUS YELLOW AINT YA

The day has begun, all right . . . Country Girl pulls the Pimp up in front of the bar in his chrome car . . . the Crazy Old Woman is at her scavenging . . . the Junkie shambles off of the stoop and dickers over the price of polishing the chrome . . . Junebug walks down the street, suddenly the Crazy Woman imagines she sees a shadow or badmark or something on him . . . she shuffles to him and forces him to sit down on the pavement and starts muttering and passing her shawl over his head trying to ward off the evil spirits.

Sunday school lasted until ten thirty and that left him just enough time to run downstairs to the church basement, go to the bathroom and get a drink of water . . . then he would run upstairs, put on his blue robe and march in with the rest of the Gospel Choir. The preacher would get going and he would talk so long Sunshine would begin to doze . . . for some reason he never knew, he would always have delicious dreams until the old lady in the seat behind would pinch the shit out of him. . . . But soon again he will be dreaming deliciously, better than ever and without no pinches either, to wake him up. In the second place he wouldnt be dreaming anyway, it will all be true just as soon as he wins this money.

NAW IT AINT RELIGION  
YOU KNOW I DONT GO FOR THAT CHOSEN FEW  
AMEN AND GOD JUST TESTING YOU

He kept going to church for the longest, he got that nice-boy-job in the shine parlor, standing all day and popping that rag and sweating, right there is where his feet started going bad on him. One guy would buy the taste one day, another man the next, so they usually had a pint or two of whiskey . . . thats when he started enjoying the sweet Lucy, as his old running buddy used to call it. Junebug squirms as the Old Scavenger Lady works on the evil mark she thinks she has seen, waving her magic cloths and mumbling and sprinkling . . . He tries to leave but she keeps pulling him back . . . she goes into the doorway where she keeps her baby carriage to get a special piece of magic and Junebug escapes. . . . Maybe, well, a move is a move and who knows what the other path would lead to, like Sunshine the morning he woke up with his feet hurting, back aching, and head splitting, and missed church . . .

NAW IT AINT WORK MY BACK STILL BREAKING  
BOSS STILL POUTIN  
CORN'S STILL ACHING  
NAW IT AINT MY OLD LADY  
BUT SHE DO THE BEST SHE CAN DO  
NAW IT AINT THAT PROGRESS TALK  
NEW ICING BUT THE SAME OLD CAKE

Upstairs the Postal Clerk reads his morning newspaper to catch up on the latest version of the man's games. . . . Upstairs too but on the other side, Missy, wearing an apron, is stringing stringbeans and Tomboy turned whore sits on the edge of her bed

in her crib digging on the new day . . . Sunshine dodges a car and pushes his rack down the street.

GOOD MORNIN SUNSHINE  
TAKE A GOOD SQUINT AT ME  
I AINT THE MAN I USED TO BE  
I AINT THE CAT YOU SAW YESTERDAY  
AT LEAST I MEAN BY TOMORROW I MEAN I WONT BE ANYWAY  
CURIOUS AINT YA (CHUCKLE) CURIOUS YELLA (CHUCKLE)

Sunshine has picked up his load and starts down the Block, working his morning line of apparel . . . the first customer for his personal shopping services is Funky Girl, who buys one of the dresses. . . . The Block is definitely stirring now . . . Sunshine raps while he rolls, bragging about why this is the big day.

MY AUNT EMMA CAME TO ME  
THE ONE WHO DROWNED OFF THE BOAT RIDE ON THAT LABOR DAY  
SHE HAD A BIG WIDE YELLOW HAT  
IT WAS ALL YELLA AGAIN AND BRAND NEW  
THE HAT WAS GREEN AND SHE WAS TOO WHEN THEY FOUND EM  
CAUSE SHE DIDNT COME UP RIGHT AWAY  
REVEREND COLEMAN SAID IT WAS TO PUNISH HER FOR HER FAST WAYS  
BUT HE ALWAYS TALKED LIKE THAT ANYWAYS  
TRYING TO SCARE FOLKS TO GREASE HIS TRAY

The Wino offers to share his taste with the Blindman. . . . Sometimes a visiting choir of young people would give an afternoon musical . . . sometimes some sister would get happy and start speaking in tongues and doing the holy dance and be carried down to the ladies room by three ushers but Sunshine isn't speaking in tongues — he knows what he's saying . . . he pats the pocket where his passport to the big money, his policy slip, is resting . . . he keeps on talking while he's walking.

SHE AND UNCLE LEROY WAS PLAYING CHINESE CHECKERS  
UNCLE LEROY LOOKS UP AND SEES ME AND ASKED ME IF I  
DIDNT WANT TO PULL UP AND PLAY  
COME ON BOY SIT DOWN, HE SAY  
HE AINT A BOY NO MORE LEROY, AUNT EMMA SAY  
HE KIN, WHAT YOU SAY SHE SAY, WE GIVE HIM SOMETHIN NICE  
HEY THATS A GOOD IDEA, UNCLE LEROY SAY  
AUNT EMMA WAS ALWAYS THE PRACTICAL ONE IN THE FAMILY ANYWAY

Sunshine gets so excited he stops his rack right there in the middle of the street and reaches in and gets his slip and waves it at the world.

THEN SHE REACH IN HER BOSOM AND  
HANDED ME THE NUMBER THAT  
GONNA HIT TODAY

Sunshine dances with his clothes rack and his ticket to freedom . . . in fact it can happen like that sometimes too. No big deal on the Block when somebody disappears, they are in the ground, you figure, or in jail, or they finally got their shit together and left for good.

(CHUCKLE) GOOD MORNIN SUNSHINE  
TAKE A GOOD SQUINT AT ME  
I AINT THE MAN I USED TO BE  
I AINT THE CAT YOU SAW YESTERDAY  
AT LEAST I MEAN BY TOMORROW I WONT BE ANYWAY  
WHOLE NEW BALLGAME — WHOLE NEW DAY

No more single-edged razor blades to shave his corns, no more soaking his feet and wrapping them up in moleskin, not with those hundred-dollar shoes he'll be striding in . . . and he won't forget, either, he promises.

FIRST THING I GOING TO DO IS SEND DOWN A BOX LOAD OF ROSES TO HAVE EM PUT ON AUNT EMMAS

GRAVE

NEXT IM GONNA BUY MYSELF SOME SHADES

SO IF IM OUT IN THE DAY

I WONT HAVE TO LOOK AT YOU

The word "shades" gets to the Junkie, who has finished polishing the car and leans on it, nodding and dreaming about his next hit out of his stupor . . . he sells Sunshine a pair of glasses he liberated from the drugstore . . . From the get-go things are looking up . . . Sunshine is on top.

LAST TIME YOU AND THAT GARMENT DISTRICT CADILLAC GONNA TRUMP ON ME

Sunshine has seen the other side of the mountain. He rolls on down the street with his dream to come . . . the Wino drinks to a dream gone by . . . the street goes on like a giant beehive — no, like a giant can of worms — shapeless and spawning, hapless and hopeless. The Junkie sells his shades, while at the bottom of a fire escape Dude and Junebug tell lies about all the hustles they have pulled. Hooker enters Tomboy's bedroom in the whorehouse and they talk shop . . . white men pay, fuck and leave, while brother hangs around for hours asking, "Is it good baby?" or trying to get the girls to come trick for him. The Dyke, shoulders hunched, waits for Dorothy . . . the Pimp comes out of the bar and talks to the Blindman . . . the Old Crazy Woman snatches up something she spots in a garbage can and puts it into her baby carriage . . . she pats it proudly but what it is and what it means, only she knows . . .

The Wino, or maybe its somebody else middle aged because the guy is more spruced up than anybody ever remembers seeing the Drunk, whoever he is swipes a plastic flower from out the baby carriage when the voodoo woman isn't looking and heads for his lady friend. The lady friend is the spitting image of Missy, of course Missy is too high class, so it must be a twin or something . . . anyway, the Wino twin mounts the steps to Missy's twin, holding the flower out gallantly as a peace offering. Once upon a time he had been old enough to be her father and even then he was never really much of a Sugar Daddy. The little money he had brought home was just enough to get through the week, including getting the shiny gabardine pants pressed for the three hundredth and second time and a little partying and drinking on Saturday nights. But that was a long time ago. Anyway, she'd lost that look these many years ago and no one would think about the father-daughter age difference ever again . . . just a matronly woman being approached by a brother on welfare. Welfare or not, Brother straightens his greasy tie, gives a down-home picnic bow and starts laying his rap down.

YOU AINT NO ASTRONAUT

BUT WE BEEN OUT THERE IN ORBIT

AND WALKED FURTHER THAN THE MOON, AINT WE

Missy's twin doesn't throw him off the steps, or curse him, or leave . . . he struck the memory in her, the old miracle happens . . . Missy's lips part, her dimple appears and her fingers quicken in the stringbeans . . . and Welfare Pops lays down his rap.

AIN'T WE

JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME

COME ON

COME ON

She leaves the door and walks down the flat to the front room and stands by the window. He follows her and gives her the flower and she sort of leans her head on his shoulder . . . they are on an island in time and space.

But outside on the Block the perch is ruling the game, squeezing and manipulating all the better to squeeze some more . . . The community flares out and then turns on itself in frustration and ignorance. Over the gentle boogie of the 1920s the old welfare Wino's theme, an ominous staccato drum-beat, begins . . . A man who is in love with Lilly heads up to her pad. Junebug, looking for an easy mark, hovers near the Blindman. Missy's knees tremble, the fire that she used to feel is seeping back . . . the body remembers what the mind has made itself forget . . . and Pops whispers in her ear,

TEN TO ONE IF YOU FOUND A DUDE

STRAIGHTEN YOU AS GOOD AS ME

WOULDNT BE NO MORE ANGLE THAN ME ANYWAY

BESIDES

The Block is building up to one of its eruptions, its in the air . . . The Junkie careens off in Sweet Daddy's pimpmobile . . . Country, who has found a life and purpose thru Islam comes in wearing a suit and tie and neat close-cropped hair, selling

Muhammed Speaks . . . the cops trawl for trouble . . . Big Tittied Dorothy eases downstairs to rap with her true love while Sweet Daddy is occupied, and up in their little world the Wino lays those three little words on Missy,

I LOVE YOU  
COME ON  
COME ON

Missy's dimples deepen as she sits down at the window . . . he sits down next to her and they hold hands. She starts to glow and he starts to plead his case. She's not going to bring up some old stuff like that, is she? So he bumped into one of her girlfriends on the bus one night — so? So she asked him to walk her home — so? So they got to her apartment and the hallway was very dark and he offered to walk her to the door — so? So he went in because he had to use the bathroom and they did have a couple of drinks — so? But he never grabbed at her tit or anything like that, like she claims.

YOUR ACCIDENT-GOING-SOMEWHERE-TO-HAPPEN-  
LOOKING GIRLFRIEND DONT MOVE ME  
SHES LYING IM TELLING YOU  
WHO YOU GOIN BELIEVE HER OR ME  
BESIDES I LOVE YOU

Tomboy-whore has gone somewhere else . . . the man who loves Lilly has her alone . . . Sweet Daddy has spotted his rival the Dyke talking to Big Titties and he eases over and cuts in on their little tête-à-tête . . .

COME ON  
COME ON  
WHO WANTS TO BE FULL OF REGRETS  
WHEN OLD FATHER TIME TAPS

The cops are stalking. Whores and barmaids stand like a herd of buffalo pawing the ground and sniffing a storm . . . Pops and Missy hold hands.

LIFE DONT GIVE NO GREEN STAMPS  
BUT I GOT YOU AND YOU GOT ME  
BESIDES I LOVE YOU  
COME ON  
COME ON

Junebug has become a shark, the Barmaid's purse is the glimmering bait . . . the Blindman, seeing better without eyes, has sensed the danger and moved away. Sweet Daddy takes Big Titties to the bar . . . the Dyke follows and she and the Pimp start to argue. Lilly's lover starts to discover the reality about momentary pleasure. The Wino raps right on, keeps right on going along as the storm warnings grow thicker.

REMEMBER WHEN MA DIED  
AND I HAD TO TAKE THE PLANE  
WELL I THOUGHT OF YOU  
CAUSE THE CLOUDS LOOKED WARM  
REMEMBER WHEN THE TV WAS NEW  
AND WE GOT THOSE SWEET OLD FILMS  
WELL I THOUGHT OF YOU  
SALMON CROQUETTES ALRIGHT WITH ME  
LONG AS YOU COOK EM  
YOUR WAY

The Junkie gets ready to try and rip off the Blindman . . . the Muslim tries to sell the Dope Fiend a paper . . . the Junkie tries to sell the Muslim a pair of sunglasses. The White Cop sniffs around the bar and the Black Cop sniffs around the street. The Black Cop gives the brother Dope Fiend a little tap, half for exercise and half for a reminder to stay in line. . . . The music is pounding and foreboding except for Missy and Wino's gentle piano theme, which keeps going along.

YOU AINT NO ASTRONAUT IS YOU  
BUT WE BEEN OUT THERE IN ORBIT AINT WE

AND WE WALKED FURTHER THAN THE MOON AINT WE  
AINT WE AINT WE AINT WE  
JUST BETWEEN YOU AN ME  
BESIDES I LOVE YOU

A shot rings out . . . Lilly is discovered dead, with her Lover standing over her, the smoking gun still in his hand. The discoverer lets out a scream and without further anything the storm breaks . . . the turds start hitting the fan, that one degree extra has been added and the boiling point has been reached and the tinderbox blown . . . everybody starts running. The Junkie steals the Blindman's bread . . . Junebug snatches the Barmaid's purse . . . the Dyke and the Pimp start battling over Big Titties . . .

Pops and Missy know the script, they have seen it a thousand times before so they hold hands and watch calmly, riding out the storm from their front window . . . Pops keeps on laying his rap down.

COME ON  
COME ON  
COME ON

The Muslim chases the Dope Fiend to recover the Blindman's money . . . the Post Office Clerk comes downstairs just to watch the show but finally after a lifetime of blindness to the con even he begins to see. He stares at the folks, then at the Man, at that immense grinning white head and huge white-gloved creature mounting the perch to view the spectacle and make sure everything adheres to plan. . . . His victims have been programmed well . . . each one probably even thinks he is an individual, that he is doing his own thing, as he dances to the jerks of the Man's strings, turning his rage, desperation, shame, hate, and blues inward on himself and on his brother.

The cops run up to the room and "apprehend the assailant" — to black folks "apprehending the assailant" simply means getting your ass half-whipped to death — they drag the guy who shot her down the stairs, working him over as they go. The Barmaid fights with Junebug for her purse . . . the Postal Clerk takes it all in and suddenly it all becomes so clear . . . Everything freezes . . . each figure as still as stone in the middle of a separate violence, the violences multiplying up to a sum larger than the parts because there is a master plan. . . . The Man stands on the perch grinning. The Postal Clerk moves through the flotsam of humanity . . . he has lost the ability to flipflop mentally and rationalize the absence of justice and honor and charity and dignity. Horatio Alger has just died for him and our old eagle has the mange. Democracy has defrosted, greed has pulled the plug. WHY, he wonders aloud, but it isn't really a question, he knows why . . .

TAKE ALL THE GRUNTS IN A HOG  
TAKE ALL THE BARKS IN A DOG  
TAKE ALL THE CRUMBS IN A PIECE OF CORNBREAD  
AND HOW COME DAY BREAK AND DONT FALL  
AND NIGHT FALL AND DONT BREAK  
AND BLUE EYES CAINT BE SATISFIED  
UNLESS HIS FOOTS UP ME  
DOWNTOWN ON SUNDAY  
YOU CAN SEE FOR MILES AND MILES  
YOU CAN HEAR A RAT PISSING  
OR A ROACH RUNNING  
IF THEY HAD RATS DOWN THERE  
ROACHES EITHER, FOR THAT MATTER  
BUT THEN WHO EVER HEARD OF A ROACH  
MAKIN IT OVER A PILE OF GREEN

The Postal Clerk goes over to the white merchant who has appeared . . . the merchant is standing nervously behind a wire cage he has had built to prevent the black people he lives on from reappropriating some of their greenbacks back to the black economy instead of to his restricted suburb. The Clerk asks for bullets.

THREE BOXES OF LONGS PLEASE

The merchant smiles sheepishly and fiddles. . . . The Block melts back into violences, the purse-snatching tussle, the muggings and the fights . . . the Postal Clerk looks around . . . the cops strongarm the murderer toward the precinct. The Postal Clerk speaks and the Block freezes . . . maybe the truth of what he is saying halts them, except of course they have

been deaf these many years.

GREEN AINT ONLY BREAD YOU KNOW  
ITS SILENCE AND THINGS THAT GROW AND COUNTRY  
GREENS THE BIG COLOR ISNT IT  
GOES ALL THE WAY ROUND IN A CIRCLE IS WHAT I MEAN  
ALL STARTS AND FINISHES WITH GREEN  
LIKE A DOG CHASING HIS TAIL  
HERE AINT NO WAY A WEED COULD  
GROW  
THAT A WEED COULD MAKE IT  
GREEN IS THE BIG COLOR THESE DAYS  
ALWAYS HAS BEEN FACE IT  
MONEY, RICH FOLKS GRAVES, GREEN BERETS  
AND A TREE WITH THE LEAVES HANGING HEAVY  
BUT THE LEAVES KEEP TURNING BROWN AND ITS ME

The Merchant trembles and grins behind his cage . . . this isnt the usual carefree goodtimer hocking his phonograph to get his suit out for a dance or something.

THE FLAG SHOULD A BEEN GREEN GREEN TOO, YOU KNOW  
GREEN AND RED ANYWAY

The Clerk turns back to the merchant,

THREE BOXES OF LONGS PLEASE

The ghetto erupts again, the Blindman gropes for shelter, the Junkie and the Muslim struggle, the Barmaid, holding on, pulls Junebug's jacket half off and the cops give their prisoner a couple more cracks and kicks and sling him into prison. Under the Postal Clerk's gaze, the street freezes again . . . he alternates between awe and anger — it all, mans inhumanity, has become so clear.

TEN TO ONE — YEH I SAID RED  
THEM WANTIN TO KEEP ME IN SOME KINDA DUNGEON  
AND I GOTTA FLASH MY THIRTY-TWO TILL JUDGMENT COME  
RIGHT — WRONG WRONG  
EVER SEEN THE PARK AFTER A BIG SNOW COME  
ITS ALL WHITE BUT IT  
FEELS GREEN IN A FUNNY WAY  
EVEN IF ITS COLD  
ITS WARM IN A FUNNY WAY  
IF ITS NOISY THE NOISE IS MUFFLED TOO  
IN A FUNNY WAY  
AND YOU CAN HAVE THE FIRST FOOT IN A DRIFT  
OR JUST WATCH IT BE  
THATS WHERE ITS AT IN A FUNNY WAY  
IF YOU FOLLOW ME  
THREE BOXES OF LONGS PLEASE

True to his breed the Merchant takes the money and washes himself of the responsibility . . . he fumbles to pass the bullets over the counter. The Postal Clerk takes the shells and rams them into his jacket pocket on the same side as his junior college letter. Maybe the Clerk's words were heard deeper down than he thought . . . the violence begins anew but now it has an outward direction. The Block turns as one and slowly advance on the perch. The writhing mass stretches its hands upward toward the hideous grinning mask of the Man . . . the Clerk's voice has the tenseness of a cable about to snap.

THERES MORE OF US  
SO LET US DO UNTO YOU THEY SAY  
WHAT I WOULDNT LET YOU DO UNTO ME  
MAYBE I'LL WORK ON THAT RATIO SOME

NOW THEY SIGNIFY ABOUT REGISTERING GUNS  
DONT BOTHER TO REGISTER BLOODS  
DOWN WHERE I COME FROM  
NEWBORN VOTING OR OTHERWISE  
TAXES JUST TAXES  
BUSINESS IS BUSINESS  
AND IM PAYING EVERYBODY TODAY YES LORD

The Postal Clerk springs back and mounts the steps and stands out on the balcony and uncovers his rifle . . . he begins to push bullets into the magazine.

IM TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS LIKE THEYD SAY  
GREEN IS BUSINESS THEYD SAY  
OLE BOSS GREEN IN A FUNNY WAY  
GREEN IS IN THE LIFE BAG  
BUT IT CAN LEAD TO A DEATH BAG TOO  
GREEN AND RED ANYWAY  
THEY JUST PUSHED IT TOO STRONG  
TOO MANY OCEAN CRUISES AND POT GUTS AND LAWNS AND THIRD CARS

He rams home the last shell . . . he cocks the rifle . . . his words are like a curse this time,

THREE BOXES OF LONGS PLEASE

He looks toward the Man-Mafia figure high on the altar. . . . The people on the Block have finally understood they are united and they advance slowly like grains of sand sifting and shifting in the hourglass of destiny or something. The huge white head continues grinning because it has a surefire cure, an antidote for a half-ass nigger resurrection. The huge hands are filled with paper money, small bills of course (when people havent got their heads really together you can get them pretty cheap . . . no need to be wasteful). The Man sows the air with money and as the bills slowly drift down, the black folks forget their destiny once again and start scrambling. They fight for the crumbs . . . Elated, clutching a buck or two, and once more divided they disappear into alleys with their short change. Yep, they scurry back to the dungeons of their existence, so conditioned that they are their own klan and gestapo. . . .

The stage becomes a prison, a guard patrolling the upper tiers rattles his club against the bars. Down below, a con is standing in the middle of his cell rapping to his roomie, who is lying in the bunk. The buddy's song is so strong that the guy in the top bunk has stopped reading his paper, only pretending to now and then so the cat won't get self-conscious or, even worse, jealous over somebody else digging his dream too hard. The guy doing the rapping is the Lover-Killer who did Lilly in. Sometimes he turns to his cellmate but mostly, though, he is speaking just to himself and to a memory.

WHATS THE PRETTIEST SIGHT IN THE WORLD  
SOME SAY A WHITE-ON-WHITE OR  
A RED-ON-RED MACHINE  
SOME SAY THE CONNECTION  
COMING AROUND THE CORNER  
SOME SAY A PLATE OF COLLARDS OR MUSTARDS  
PRETTIEST THING I EVER SEEN WAS LILLY  
LILLY DOING THE ZAM POU GHI  
ZAMPOUGHI THATS WHAT I USED TO CALL  
THE FUNKY KINDA DANCE SHE'D DO  
LILLY DO THE ZAMPOUGHI  
EVERYTIME I PULLED HER COAT-TAIL

The guards pace . . . somewhere water trickles from a leaky faucet, a prisoner snores down the block, a punk grunts as he touches his toes for his cellmate lover. The Con smacks his hand on his roommate's bunk and brags and grins.

SCREAM AND SCRATCHER  
MAKE YOUR HEART BUT WITH PRIDE  
LAY THERE CATCH HER BREATH  
GETTING HERSELF BACK TOGETHER

THEN — THE GREATEST THING ON EARTH  
SHE'D JUMP UP AND DO THAT ZAMPOUGHI BABY  
FOR ALL SHE WAS WORTH — FOR ME  
LILLY DANCED THE ZAMPOUGHI  
EVERYTIME I PULLED HER COAT-TAIL  
I CAN SEE IT NOW BEFORE ME AS PLAIN AS DAY

Its so real to him that it materializes. . . . There's his dream over his head . . . a fine black queen of a beauty, naked as the day she was born, face to make a preacher put his Bible down, body to make a bulldog gnaw through his chain.

DO IT LILLY

And the vision does it, her body creating gigantic impossibilities of lovemaking, new dimensions of fuck. Down in his cell, the Con bucks with her and the drum rises to the rhythm of the loins and groin . . . he screams to the memory,

BOOM TAKA BOOM TAKA  
DO IT LILLY

The Con calms down . . . the vision dims . . . there is a gleam in his eye and a smile on his face . . . he glances toward the cellmate and touches his pants . . . memories are a bitch, Jim, and you can fix them to suit you.

SOMETIMES ID LAY IT TO HER OVEN STYLE  
SO HOT WE'D ALMOST SMOOTHER  
LAY THERE PANTING A LITTLE WHILE  
THEN LILLY JUMPS ON HER FEET  
SWEAT BE RUNNING OFF HER HEAD  
ID BE RUNNING DOWN HER LEG  
SHE'D SMILE DOWN  
BE LIKE GETTING BAPTISED OR SOMETHING ROOMIE  
BE LIKE THE HOLY GHOST OR SOMETHING CALLING ME  
LORD  
SHE'D GRUNT WHEN I WORKED THE LEFT SIDE OF HER STREET  
GET IT GET IT BABY  
THATS WHAT SHE'D WHISPER  
MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE  
MORNING POURING DOWN RAIN  
WHEN I WORKED THE RIGHT SIDE OF HER STREET

A guard's billy rattles against the wall and the Con, pulled up short to reality, the present, then the future, too . . . he shrugs it away.

I AINT SCARED WHY SHOULD I BE  
I JUST KNOW SHE AINT MAD AT ME  
SOON I'LL SEE HER FOREVER  
SHE'LL BE DANCING LIKE SHE USE TO  
BUT JUST FOR ME  
LILLY DANCED THE ZAMPOUGHI  
EVERYTIME I PULLED HER COATTAIL  
I CAN SEE IT NOW BEFORE ME AS PLAIN AS DAY  
DO IT LILLY BOOM TAKA BOOM TAKA  
DO IT LILLY

Lilly reappears overhead, doing her dance, he joins her dancing in his cell, feeling her presence, feeling all that joy, movement from muscles that aint even supposed to be used. He throws his hands in the air and joins her in his fucked-up head until the laughing vision fades away. Oh yes didnt they get it on . . .

SOMETIMES GET IT TOGETHER COUNTRY STYLE  
SO HARD UNTIL WE'D GET A MISTER CHARLIE HORSE  
GET BACK THAT BREATH AND THAT OLD CRAM BE DONE

OFF THAT OLD PALLET SHED COME  
MOST BOSS SHAPE EVER LAID EYES ON  
AND GREATEST DANCE EVER BEEN DONE  
TOWERING UP OVER ME LIKE SOME  
AFRICAN QUEEN  
AFRICAN QUEEN CEPT FOR THE FLY PAPER IN THE CEILING  
ALL THAT MOJO SHAKING AND SWINGING OVER ME  
ID LAY THERE LOOKING  
HAPPINESS AINT EVEN THE WORD FOR IT  
WHEN YOU BALL A CHICK  
AND YOU KNOW SHE HAD A BALL  
GETS UP DANCING AND EVERYTHING  
THAT IT BABY  
ID LAY THERE LOOKING JIM  
TEN FEET TALL  
HER DANCE WAS ME JIM

The Con shakes his head like he's trying to clear it trying to see. . . . What happened anyway, how did it go wrong?

HOW YOU GONNA EXPLAIN  
WHAT COULD THE JUDGE HAVE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT  
LILLY DOING THE ZAMPOUGHI EVERYTIME SOMEBODY PULLED HER COATTAIL  
LILLY DONE THE ZAMPOUGHI  
EVERYTIME I PULLED HER COATTAIL  
I CAN SEE IT NOW BEFORE ME AS PLAIN AS DAY

He gets deep into his thing . . . Lilly reappears dancing that dance. Maybe the brother misunderstood, maybe she was digging IT and he figured it's HIM that she was going for . . . maybe his bragging is trying to cover something else. What got his nose so open behind her anyhow, no matter who she was, unless for instance it was the first time he ever turned on some woman so strong . . . Lilly grinds her machine, you can just smell the stuff dripping.

DO IT LILLY BOOM TAKA BOOM TAKA

He dances remembering . . .

DO IT LILLY  
DO IT LILLY  
DO IT LILLY

Then he remembers too much . . . he recoils suddenly and covers his eyes . . . his face has all the pain in it that a heart can conceive. If it only wasnt so. There is his Lilly dancing but he isnt the one receiving. . . . The grin has twisted to a grimace . . . the drum pounds its command, the trumpets scream, his eyes stare at the phantom.

LILLY

In a stupor he reenacts the scene . . . he reaches for his back pocket where he kept his gun . . . he points it.

LILLY

And fires three times. . . . His dream goes into convulsions, then she stiffens and finally melts to the ground. He kneels on the cell floor, he sways to and fro, maybe he is grieving over her body, maybe he thinks he is rocking her soul. He sobs.

WHATS THE PRETTIEST THING YOU EVER SEEN  
A NEW SHORT WHITE-ON-WHITE RED-ON-RED GREEN-ON-GREEN  
PRETTIEST THING I EVER SEEN WAS LILLY  
LILLY DOING THE ZAMPOUGHI

Slowly that bad old memory fades away and there is his sweet old Lilly again. . . . She rises back from doom and begins to sway . . . the brother goes wild with joy and works with her, bump for bump and grind for grind, twist for twist.

ZAMPOUGHI THATS WHAT I USE TO CALL  
THE FUNNY KINDA DANCE SHE'D DO  
LILLY DONE THE ZAMPOUGHI  
EVERYTIME I PULLED HER COATTAIL  
I CAN SEE IT NOW BEFORE ME AS PLAIN AS DAY

Lilly dances, putting Salome, Josephine and everybody else to shame . . . the Con looks up at her with love and pride . . . his mind has gone back out there. When the guard and priest come to take him, he brushes away the handcuffs and goes down that last mile dancing because he's going to meet his Lilly. . . . He sings to her, just keep on keeping on he will be there soon, he screams.

DO IT LILLY BOOM TAKA BOOM TAKA  
DO IT LILLY  
DO IT LILLY  
DO IT LILLY

As they disappear down the corridor a gong is rung, like they used to do at executions in China, but it's not really that at all . . . it's Madison Square Garden or some place like that on fight night, with peanut vendors and all, and the gong belongs to the announcer introducing the gladiators.

A boxing match is three things rolled into one — a baseball game, a barber shop and of course what they call the race question. Since the Good Book said the first shall be last, take race. Ever since Jack Johnson, promoters have understood that there's a lot of money in race hatred. People will pay to participate safely in a race war. Jack Johnson and White Hopes . . . Joe Louis, Blacks bending forward around those pointy-headed radios listening to Clem McCarthy, with everybody putting his fists inside the Brown Bomber's fists to punch all the arrogance out of the boss man, Sugar Ray whipping the policeman, Henry Armstrong kicking the landlord's ass . . . Muhammad Ali tearing up the president of the unions, you couldnt get in. Of course now that Blacks can play football and basketball, more and more fights are between Puerto Ricans and Greeks, even between Cubans and Argentinians or Japanese and Thais or whatever. But it's always the fighters carrying their group, belonging to that group, responsible to each person in that group, and still the best match, as any promoter will tell you, is black and white — a natural; a classic.

Second a barbershop . . . the barbershop being a social center a cut above the pool hall, a place for fancy lies, deep philosophy, great checker games and a great deal of wit and signifying. . . . As the checker games quickened, as the moves became faster, as Brother Dudley moved in for the kill, with each move he'd mutter "Going on up in his face" — BAP, the checker would slap on the board — "Go on up in his face" — BAP, till the last winning move. If Brother Dudley would fall into a trap he'd "Go on up in his face" till Mr' Bailey sprung the ambush and the scene would end with "Go on up in his face, and lose your ass." The personal dash and play of these Saturday duels was the thing, the style of signifying was as important as the game . . . a classical signifier was respected. Third, there is baseball. In the days before Branch Rickey discovered there was a lot of money in winning, even if you used niggers, there were the Negro Leagues . . . the Cuban Stars, Kansas City Monarchs, the Home-stead Greys, Baltimore Elite Giants, Philadelphia Stars. . . . Oh those times. . . . Five-dollar bills passed up and down the stands like water — they'd bet the next ball was a curve, low and outside. They'd bet on the color of the umpire's drawers. They'd bet Duchill would start a double play before Bill got a swing at the ball. And there was Frog. Even if you forget ballplayers . . . forget the games . . . forget the good feeling of being among 10,000 niggers having an outdoor party, a natural picnic during a ballgame. One thing you dont ever forget is SIGNIFYING. Half the Fun was Frog. He had a foghorn voice that could reach 40th and Market Street and he rode everybody — both teams, the umpires, the waterboys, coaches, concessionaires, but mostly the batters. "Look at him! Tearin big holes in the atmosphere! Ramsay, show him the ball! Hit a line drive to the catcher and sit down, or go back to cuttin tobacco!" Ears burned, jaws clamped, but everybody cooled it. It was a challenge of cool — a duel of style, and it was Frog's Thing. And it was Frog, free, Frog, Master of Repartee, Frog, celebrity, Frog, King signifier, Frog, well-known man-aboutPhilly, or Chicago or St' Louis. Every black city had a Frog . . . every barbershop and baseball game too, Frog somebody, Frog Me!

BONG

Here comes Frog's heir, Ghost, Phantom, Grandson, strutting into the stands. The gong rings several times, announcing the fight is about to start. Bro looks around checking the seats. He holds five single dollars, each folded lengthwise, so that his hand seems to be growing green fingers. He waves his arm with palms out-stretched, each wave starting from way down somewhere in his deepest being. His voice is loud, impudent, uncompromising, fuck the mincing credit-to-the-race thing, Lord, and not to be ignored by anyone in the crowd — rich, poor, black, blue, white, beige — he's here and he means to get action.

I GOT FIVE BAD BEANS LOOKIN FOR TROUBLE  
FIVE FIRST PRESIDENT BACKING THE BROTHER  
LOOKING FOR FIVE MORE BACKING THE OTHER  
FIVE UPPITY BEANS JUST WAITIN  
FOR SOMEBODY TO TRY AND PUT EM IN THEIR PLACE  
I GOT THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY  
I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

His knit is red on red and expensive, his hat is floppy and red and stylish for days. His slacks are velvet and red and styled. His shoes are red and black, high-heeled, and the envy of his peer group. He is clean and together forever. Dont be trying to ignore him, he wants action . . .

I SAY BROTHER GONNA WHIP SOME BEHIND  
THE OTHER STUD GOT ELEVEN POUNDS ON HIM  
BUT BRER GONNA STOMP HIM LIMB FROM LIMB  
DONT BE SHY COME ON MAKE ME A LIE  
WHO GOT THOSE FIVE BEANS GONNA MAKE A FIB OUTTA ME  
IM TAKING THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY  
I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

Frog's Phantom has said what's in all minds, he has articulated the shit and brought it right down home and there is discomfort around him. . . . Undaunted, unashamed, he waves his five-dollar lance.

BLACK AINT ONLY BEAUTIFUL ITS BAD TOO  
ITS FAST CLASSY NAME TAKING AND ASS KICKING TOO  
IM LOOKING FOR FIVE BEANS THAT SAY IT AINT TRUE  
PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MIND IS COME ON  
LIKE YOUR RAGGEDY MAMMY TAUGHT YOU  
I GOT THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY  
I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

The White folks turn red and the black folks turn away . . . talking about their mothers dont get it, okay he'll dig deeper with the most terrible of weapons — fear and the truth — at least anyway what they fear is the truth.

IM GONNA LAY A LITTLE T'S' TOP SECRET ON YOU  
THIS IS MOVEMENT MONEY IM A MILITANT  
MY DASHIKIS IN THE CLEANERS TODAY BUT IM A LIEUTENANT  
SO TAKE MY MONEY DO YOURSELF A FAVOR COME ON  
SELF-PRESERVATION FIRST LAW OF NATURE  
I GOT THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY  
I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

Frog concentrates on the white folks but they dont take the bait . . . obviously they know who the favorite is too. Frog comes on so strong the Blacks who were a little embarrassed about him start feeling tingles of race pride and start unhuhing and amening as he preaches his jive.

WHO GOT THAT FIVE BEAN TAIL TO WAG  
ITS A POOR DOG THAT DONT, YOU KNOW  
WHO GOT A FIVE BEAN WHITE TRUMPET TO BLOW  
WHO GOT FIVE TO BACK THE NEW HOPE COME ON  
WHO SAYS BLACKS A NO NO  
I GOT THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY  
I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

The gong clangs . . . the fight starts, and it's a battle. Frog stands there in the bleachers feet apart, ducking, jabbing, joining his black brother in the ring. . . . Frog forgets his hustle and his screaming is some deeper thing.

GET IN THERE  
ONE TWO

ONE TWO  
BURN HIM BURN HIM  
PUT SOME FIST IN HIS FACE  
LAY SOMA THAT DOWN HOME HEAD WHIPPIN ON HIM  
BURN HIM BURN HIM  
IT AINT THE BREAD  
IT HIM WINNING AND THEM ACTING THE WAY THEY DO  
LIKE GOD ONLY GAVE THEM THE RIGHT TO

A big "ooh!" from the crowd, triumphant from the white half and disappointment from the black half . . . the black fighter has been hit hard, hurt . . . he's still on his feet though . . . yes he is, he clears his head and totters back in there. The crowd's sentiments have been stripped to the nitty gritty, they jab, cheer and threaten one another . . . Frog pleads, pushes and prays to his black brother in the ring.

COME ON BRER PLEASE  
THE MAN WHO BRINGS YOUR MA HER WELFARE CHECK BET ON YOU  
YOU SURE DONT WANT TO MAKE ME MAD DO YA  
BURN HIM BURN HIM — COME ON BRER, BURN HIM  
IF YOU DONT WHIP HIM IM GONNA COME DOWN THERE AND WHIP YOU

The crowd fights, everybody in his mind is in there diving and ducking with his or her champion. The blood rises . . . the empathy flows out into torsos, elbows, knees, arms . . . folks begin to nudge, then bump each other . . . soon it could be almost blow for blow with the happenings in the ring. Frog's loyalty is undying, he waves his money and keeps on screaming,

COME ON  
I GOT THE BLOOD WHO GOT WHITEY

Another big "OOH!" the white guy has been hit hard. . . . The black guy starts holding his own . . . the fight violence spreads from the two men in the ring into the crowd. The black and white people begin to get it on, shoving one another. Dont you shove me, damnit. . . . Watch where you're swinging, fool! Goddamit, thats my foot! Lean the fuck off me! Im uh gonna tell you one more time. Motherfucker! Nigger! Honkey! Frog the agitator, instigator, just keeps right on signifying, shouting,

I GOT THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY  
IM TAKING THE SOUL WHO GOT WHITEY

The soil of racism and hatred in the arena is so fertile that from the two seeds battling it out down in the ring a huge riot plant grows. Everyone is swinging and stomping. The plant engulfs the stadium . . . it keeps right on growing and going, finally it reaches the Block and it bursts into full bloom and the battle is on. Frog's voice roars above the din swearing allegiance.

I GOT THE BLOOD  
I GOT THE BLOOD

The Postal Clerk fires the rifle and yells that he'll get whitey. The air is filled with identifiable flying objects and bodies, people chasing merchandise and one another. Possession they say is nine-tenths of the law . . . bloods know better. Fuck putting law and possession together. Law is law, a lesson any slum landlord will be happy to teach you in court any day, and possession is possession, especially when one is trafficking with, in, or about, movable objects. Ten-tenths of having is possession.

People tear ass by carrying those short-term dreams. Wino has a case of whiskey . . . whore runs up the steps with some imitation silk fabric . . . the Blindman has a case of liquor too, he runs down the street dragging the loot by his cane . . . the Wino relates to his dilemma and gives him directions. A couple of women run to their apartments carrying newstyle transistor radios. Somebody has himself a TV. Sunshine staggers along with a whole wide of beef. The tiger-size Rat rips himself off a fur coat, he runs with it draped over his arm, he stops to rip off a section of drainpipe, he doesnt know why, just feels like it. A woman runs with a picture of John Kennedy. . . . Cops run back and forth chasing the nearest larceny, but the looting is too spread, too general. In a splash of colors and perfume, Funky Girl leaps over the hood of an abandoned smoldering car, a stolen dress flashing like a disembodied ballet skirt . . . Junebug tears along with a watermelon on his shoulder. Even Missy hurries down the street pushing a shopping cart full of groceries and nonphosphate detergents. She

ducks down a friendly alley, a man with a case of wine stops to get a breath in front of the car wreck, but a cop catches him and knocks him to the ground. The Postal Clerk gets pinned by another cop . . . the cops are getting organized, but a ghetto counterattack in the form of half-inflated inner tubes pins the pigs down and lets the prisoners slip away. The whirlwind is at its crescendo . . . one moment it's the climax of the storm, then suddenly the next moment it has gone and the silence is earsplitting . . . not a sound except for the panting of the black and white cops, with their guns drawn, standing back to back. . . . All is calm . . . then theres the flap flopping of the Crazy Old Lady's worn-out slippers as she shuffles down the ravaged Block. Right under the cops' nose she stops and bends up a dress that got orphaned in the storm . . . she looks into the guns, defiantly sucks her gums, puts the dress in her bag, and shuffles away with dignity. . . . The cops look at each other sheepishly, thankful to be alive and well and embarrassed by their terror.

The night air seems strangely clear almost like after a rain. Three whores are the first folks back on the job after the demilitarization of the Block. Rain, shine, water, mud, shit, or blood, pussy always sells — in there somewhere there must be some kind of statement about human beings. The cops saunter over to the girls . . . something in the way they move is wrong, the whores fidget nervous defenseless fillies, you can almost smell the danger. . . . The cops spring, the two more experienced girls get away . . . but Tomboy, the new pro, gets separated from the herd (it aint all about getting new shoes everyday), the Black Cop handcuffs her and jerks her away . . . The abandoned hulk turns into a police car and the White Cop gets in front and takes the wheel while the Black Cop roughhouses Tomboy to the back seat and pulls her in with him. He grins, but the grin is too big to be good-natured. The cards are on the table but its not her deck. The terror shows in her eyes and she can't face his smile . . . the music is all panic and oppression . . . She tries to sulk, he slaps her just to show the score, then he shuts the door. Their red light begins to circle . . . they cruise the silent streets. The Black Cop takes his time . . . there's no man woman interplay of will-she-or-wont-she . . . he's the law and she's a whore . . . anyway he figures maybe things can be handled with a smile — right. He takes the handcuffs off and he speaks to her in a soft friendly voice.

I KNOW YOU DIDNT CUT THAT OFAY  
IT HAPPENED LAST MONTH ANYWAY  
JUST AN EXCUSE, YOU TOO NEW  
HERES THE DEAL  
IVE HAD MY EYES ON YOU  
YOU JUST BEEN WALKIN A WEEK OR TWO  
SMILE BROWN SUGAR

The Pimp is the only protection she's got and she knows he knows better than to jump in even if he was there . . . life is like a pool hall, how good you shoot is secondary, the trick is pickin who you play. . . . The car turns down a street. Besides . . .

ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

The White Cop adjusts the rearview mirror so as not to miss out on the action. The Tomboy doesn't say anything, both pigs grin . . . she is kinda cute. . . . The Black Cop sees himself as a sharp worldly-wise detective.

WHAT PUT YOU ON THE BLOCK ANYWAY  
A KID, BIG H, OR AN OLD MAN  
PROBABLY ALL THREE  
HERES THE DEAL  
WOULDNT BE NO NEWS TO ME  
AIN'T NOTHIN UNDER A ROCK I AINT SEEN

He doesnt want to deliver some tearstained birthday present to the new guy. . . . Who wants to hump a sniffling broad . . .

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

He draws his jeweled revolver, he strokes her temples with the barrel, he caresses her face . . . he strokes her lips with the gun.

. . . She starts to tremble and a tear leaks through and quivers on her cheek and finally drips away, tumbling into that ocean somewhere out there of tears spilled by brutalized women. . . . Maybe she is just making it happen . . . he knows a lot of guys who let themselves be put on by a bitch who could cry on cue.

DONT PLAY WIDE WET EYES ON ME  
CRY AND YOU CRY ALONE  
ITS COOL IM A BLOOD TOO  
NOTHIN GONNA HAPPEN TO YOU  
AT LEAST NOTHIN NEW

She better stop that long face shit too . . . Blacks gotta have more pride, he wants to make a good impression. She shouldnt let the race down now should she.

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE IF YOU KNOW WHATS GOOD FOR YOU

He grabs her chin with his left hand and turns her so she must look at him . . . his tone is oily and confidential . . . he gives her the rundown.

ITS SO TO SPEAK A LITTLE PARTY  
A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR SOLLY  
SO IM TAKIN YOU IN  
SO TO SPEAK FOR A LITTLE QUESTIONIN  
COLLECTIN A LITTLE DUES

He grabs his balls to illustrate his point . . . Tomboy tries to make her break, she lurches for the door . . . He grabs her like a cat does a mouse he's got hemmed in. It's teaching-a-lesson time again and he slaps the shit out of her while he finishes his phrase. . . . She sees it coming but he's holding her chin in that iron grip of his. He whacks her five times, once between each line.

SO(WHACK)TO(WHACK)SPEAK(WHACK)POLICE(WHACK)DUES(WHACK)

He is not going to have any black bitch he brings in to do a little favor for some of the fellows giving his buddies some trouble . . . theyre good guys, every one of them . . . sure, he is the only Negro on his shift and he is treated just like the other men. . . . Look on the bright side, you are your attitude, your attitude is you.

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

So — how come he has got to take eighths or ninths or something, who's doing the errand . . . she is a cute little thing too and first come, first served, they say. . . . He continues his friendly neighborhood priest's thing but his voice begins to go husky with lust.

AIN T GONNA PULL NO TRAIN ON YOU  
NO FREIGHT TRAIN ANYWAY  
MAYBE ONE OR TWO AFTER THE SURPRISEE  
HE'S FIRST CAUSE ITS HIS PARTY  
FIRST AS FAR AS THEYLL KNOW ANYWAY  
ANYHOW IT LOOK LIKE RAIN TO-NIGHT ANYWAY

His voice has lost its cool. He grabs her by her hair and lifts slowly, she rises with the pain screaming from her scalp. . . . His refrain has the threat of everything.

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
IT'S SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE IF YOU KNOW WHATS GOOD FOR YOU

First she rises, now she sinks down, not on the seat . . . this time he pushes her between his legs in the classic cocksucking position, in the back seat of a car and everything. . . . They cruise on through the park. On the Block you aint got no padding . . . most of the things other people get to swear they would never do because it aint really put to the crunch gets put to that crunch daily on the Block. On the Block folks dont get to go through life smug an psyched out about themselves, about how no matter what, what they wont do and how no one better ever try this or that etc' Nope, the Block doesnt have that bullshit

padding. Tomboy starts giving up head. . . . The Policeman's voice grows louder and, paradoxically, more confidential too . . .

GET DOWN AND BUSY IT WOULDNT PAY  
FOR FOLKS TO SEE YOU CRUISING  
MY PARTNERS WHITE BUT HES OK  
SOME OF THE GUYS WOULDNT LIKE IT  
MY PARTNER DONT MIND SECONDS  
AS LONG AS SHES A SISTER ANYWAY

Brother is so proud that he has elevated himself . . . to him the height of acceptance is having a Caucasian buddy who doesn't mind raping after him. . . . He warns her about not causing his white folks any trouble at the same time he's getting his other thing together.

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU  
YOU GONNA STRAIGHTEN HIM  
DONT LET IT SLIP AT THE STATION  
LONG AS YOU SWEET  
SOON AS YOU FINISH STRAIGHTENIN ME

He moans with pleasure, his fists full of her hair. . . . Her lips her hands her tongue her tears run over his dick, or is it his gun. He starts making those sweet little promises, no matter what the circumstances, those little mumbles that weld folks together as the moment gets near.

YOU GOT PEACE ON MY BEAT  
WHAT THEY DONT KNOW DONT HURT ME

It's time. He's shrieking, the music echoes his shrieks . . .

SMILE BROWN SUGAR  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE IF YOU KNOW WHATS GOOD FOR YOU

He fills her with himself, gags her with himself. It would be good for a sense of symmetry in the morality of the universe, or in the name of poetic retribution that the Black Cop didn't enjoy the come, but a hard-on has no God and it feels terrific. As the cats say, the worst blow job in the world was excellent. The whole car shudders, Dave the White Cop is driving steadily . . . he catches the action through his mirror . . . he shivers a little. The Black Cop's fists relax in Tomboy's hair. His chest heaves . . . he allows her to sit on the seat. With the back of one hand she wipes her trembling mouth but she does it softly, not defiantly. She knows she's got no comeback . . . the score is very clear. Her shocked eyes stare, her ears are deaf to all but the pounding violence. Even a whore don't like to be made to do anything . . . and surely not for free. Thing is, no one asked her and a few other disenfranchised zillions what they like, so what else is new? . . . Besides, if you're a gentleman, you never hit a lady unless she asks you to. The car slows down and stops. Tomboy's evening is just beginning, the Colored Cop gets out the back and the White Cop gets out the front and they exchange places.

ALL RIGHT NOW  
IM CHANGING PLACES WITH DAVE  
NOW JUST DONT GET IMPATIENT  
JUST ONE MORE LITTLE DETOUR  
BEFORE WE SEE THE STATION  
DAVES GONNA QUESTION YOU NOW

Dave lays her across the back seat. . . . The Black Cop starts driving . . . he gives his asshole philosophy about you being your attitude and your attitude being you that he read in Readers Digest.

SMILE BROWN SUGAR SMILE  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

Tomboy knows better than to struggle. . . . The Black Cop adjusts his rearview mirror too so he wont miss the show . . . now that the Hooker is being sensible and he has gotten his he goes back into his brotherhood number . . .

US BLOODS GOTTA STICK TOGETHER  
SO HERES A TIP FOR YOU  
ALWAYS GET QUESTIONED BY YOUNG GUYS  
OLD ONES CAN TURN MEAN  
SPECIALLY IF THEY CANT AND TRY  
THERE A LOT OF PLACES FOR A BILLY, YOU KNOW  
EVEN SAW EM FIX A WHITE GIRL

Dave has her dress up around her waist.

EVEN IF SHE WAS A HIPPIE  
SMILE BROWN SUGAR SMILE  
ITS SALAMAGGI'S BIRTHDAY  
SMILE IF YOU KNOW WHATS GOOD FOR YOU SMILE

They cruise through the night, the black guy feels proud at what he sees in the rearview mirror . . . white dick after black dick . . .

SMILE  
SMILE  
SMILE BROWN SUGAR SMILE

They go through the park, then down the Block heading for the precinct. The street seems deserted except for the Old Crazy woman over there who is trying to set up a raggedy beach umbrella in a grate, some kind of shelter . . . for who . . . for what? Some silhouette looms up in front of the car . . . the screech and smell of skidding brakes. The cops hop out, guns ready. . . . The silhouette turns out to be the Junkie, with 16" portable TV. . . . In life a motherfucker can never forget what he's about . . . a junkie is about getting junk in him. The Junkie takes a couple more steps and then, just as the cops get to him, he sets the TV down, goes into a nod — the hip new city cousin of that old Uncle Tom game, head scratching and shuffling.

Junebug happens to be coming along, glances over to dig the scene. The cops see sneakers-and-Afro and call him over on G·P' . . . Junebug hesitates . . . If he isn't guilty, why is he standing so far away? If he is innocent why does he look that way? Junebug knows there is no need trying to explain, he makes a break and the cops go after him.

The Junkie comes out of that nod, grabs the TV and gets in the wind. Junebug runs up the stairs and across a fire escape . . . one cop fires but misses. Junebug scrambles along the platform of a gutted house. Junebug runs down some whorehouse steps and crouches in an alley. The cops dash past with drawn guns . . . Junebug ducks up a flight of stairs. A shot rings out, he dives under some furniture on a balcony and peers from under a chair . . . a Cop collides into the derelict Scavenger Woman spinning her tattered totem of a beach umbrella. Junebug thinks he sees his chance. A Cop starts to climb, he pants and sweats . . . Junebug watches him intently, he is almost at the roof . . . Junebug leaps from the balcony to the lightpole. The Cop fires at the flashing form. Junebug's momentum swings him around and around the pole, a wounded flag being lowered. A first drop of blood hits the ground before he does. He totters for a moment on the sidewalk, then he begins to run away, at least he thinks he does, but dying Junebug has to keep hanging onto the pole for support so he only turns in a hopeless circle. Around and around back to where he has come from. But he keeps going . . . anyway it's what niggers are supposed to do — Right. Run from mama, run from the other gang's turf, run on the baseball diamond, the football field . . . run, nigger, run. . . . Yeah, nigger run in circles. Junebug calls on the black man's second-in-command, his back-door God, gasping the song.

COME ON FEET  
CRUISE FOR ME  
TROUBLE  
AIN'T NO PLACE TO BE  
COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING

Run, Junebug. . . . He tries to let go of the pole, he trips and almost falls, but he manages to grab the pole again and continue his plea.

COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING  
YOU'RE ON  
TO OLD WHITEY'S GAME  
COME ON LEGS  
COME ON RUN

Junebug knows something is wrong, he knows he's not making any progress, but he can't let go the pole.

COME ON LEGS  
COME ON RUN  
GUILTY'S  
WHAT HE SAY YOU DONE  
COME ON KNEES  
DON'T BE MEAN

Maybe Junebug feels that hot squishy liquid in his shoes.

COME ON KNEES  
DON'T BE MEAN  
AIN'T FIRST RED  
YOU EVER SEEN  
COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING

The cops maneuver to get better shots at their target.

COME ON BABY  
DON'T GIVE IN ON ME  
COME ON FEET  
CRUISE FOR ME  
COME ON LEGS  
COME ON RUN  
COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING

In Junebug's mind he is kicking ass, runningwise . . . he is traveling fast fast, fast, he is already on the outskirts of town, it's only the sweat and shit that make it all blurry, make it look like still the same old street. Who squealed anyway? He's back to his hub-cap stealing days. . . . How did he get in this anyway?

WHO PUT THE BAD MOUTH ON ME

As he gets weaker, he thinks he is getting stronger . . .

ANYWAY THE WAY  
I PICK EM UP  
AND PUT EM DOWN  
EVEN IF IT GOT MY NAME ON IT  
WON'T CATCH ME NOW  
COME ON FEET  
CRUISE FOR ME  
COME ON LEGS  
COME ON RUN  
COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING

Junebug begins to smile. Up above the two cops draw beads on him. He lets go of the pole but he doesn't fall. He is too far gone for that. He thinks he is OK, terrific (that's what holding him up). He starts doing some incredible dancing, twirls, splits, slides, the funky penguin leap. The cops fire from their crouch. Their shots cut him down at the top of his number. He

twitches and jerks in midair . . . he convulses into a grotesque crucifixion and screams as he drops . . .

## LORD

The body rolls over on its stomach. It raises its head it's dying . . . the face smiles, like a grandmother whose children and grandchildren are well off does when her times has come, when peace can be felt, when her soul is already halfway to glory, singing about coming to the end of the journey hand in hand with the Master and everything. . . . But Junebug isn't dying happy like some grandma . . . he thinks he is living, he thinks he has won, he hasn't figured out yet he's a goner, he thinks he has outrun the universe . . .

FEET WE SURE DO GET AROUND  
NEVER PUT US IN  
SOME COLD ASS GROUND

Like slimy water swirling slowly, around a sewer the Block people are gradually sucked toward Junebug as his life drains away. The cops inch forward too, guns trained on the body just in case.

SURE IS DARK  
NEVER BEEN OUT THIS WAY

Pain suddenly hits him and he flops over on his back. Another jolt of pain comes and Junebug gets his first glimpse of Old Death and screams. Maybe, too, looking up the way he is, he notices the huge white head and hands on the platform above the ghettos of the world, the Man grinning down.

## MAMA

The pain subsides momentarily . . . Junebug manages to lie on his side. Maybe his mother answered after all, he is smiling again anyway . . .

ANYWAY  
IM SAFE AND SOUND  
BET WE BROKE THE OLYMPIC TWO TWENTY  
OR CROSS COUNTRY  
OR SOMETHING  
SURE IS LONELY  
SURE MOST QUIETEST TURF I EVER SEEN  
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE SUN  
SURE GONE AWAY  
SURE BLACKER THAN A LANDLORD'S SOUL  
MUSTA RUN ALL DAY  
YEH MUSTA RUN ALL DAY

His smile flowers with pride, his eyes are open but they don't see. He is lying on his side . . . in a final burst of escape his feet begin running in spasms. The Block's folks gather around, some artist should paint the scene and label it "underprivileged inhabitants watching a game of chance run down" Junebug's legs begin churning again, driving his body in a tight sticky circle of his own blood, twirling and flipping like some lawn sprinkler gone haywire. . . . His voice is a hoarse scream and a whisper.

SURE AM A BITCH  
MUSTA RUN ALL DAY  
SURE YEAH  
YEAH BABY  
COME ON FEET  
CRUISE FOR ME  
COME ON FEET  
COME ON RUN  
COME ON LEGS  
COME ON RUN

The ring tightens. Junebug's running has now seeped to a flop here and a twitch there, the death battle. . . . He manages to

gasp out a last plea.

COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING  
COME ON FEET  
DO YOUR THING

Junebug doesn't have to run anymore, the people move in, the circle closes, his last convulsion jerks him into the position he had when he was resting in his mama's tummy.

Missy drops to her knees, she stretches her arms toward the body. "He was only a baby," she sobs. Already the cops start poking people to move on, to cool out, to circulate, to go on home, to get on away from the body. Not this time, a murmur is growing. . . . The cops bark orders, trying to cool things down. . . . "You got three seconds to clear the streets . . ." NO. Not this time. . . . The Postal Clerk runs upstairs . . . Missy clutches Junebug's body, and will not be moved . . . a Cop tries to pull her away but she holds the body and refuses . . . Sunshine and Dude jump the Cop from behind and tussle with him and fling him across the street . . . the Cop jumps back to his feet but before he can aim his piece a shot rings out. The Postal Clerk has sniped him from a balcony . . . the Cop pitches forward dead.

A niggerquake begins . . . WAR.

The Man steps in.

Suddenly blinding lights flash on, cutting everything short . . .

The light is harsh and horrifying, and the Block can be seen as a prison. High above the Block, the Man himself operates the main searchlight, he sweeps it back and forth across the camp grounds. The folks stagger around blinded and cowering. The Man reaches into his bag and tosses out the puppet strings . . . they flutter gently down prettily (hope ropes for drowning people) . . . folks eagerly lunge for them . . . they grasp them. There's a whole transformation. Once someone has hold of a string, he becomes calm and obedient. The Blindman for example is down on his knees touching Junebug's body and sobbing silently. A streamer falls in his hand . . . instantly it's a whole other bag. He takes his cane, rises and let himself be led up the wall . . . Everybody lines up against the building. Once again (except if you don't look too closely at the people standing back as far as they can, cowering and frozen) the Block looks like a maypole or a gigantic present, the strings flowing so naturally and prettily from the perch and with everyone holding a streamer. Suddenly something moves back there . . . it's the Crazy Old Scavenger Lady. She brushes aside the loose streamers . . . she pushes through the line of niggerots . . . she looks down at Junebug's crumpled body lying there . . . she looks over at the people against the wall with their strings, zombies frozen in midcringe . . . She lets out a wail from the bottom of her soul . . . the first sound anyone has heard her utter.

She spins downstage, swinging her scavenger sack . . . she rests the bag on the ground and freezes, a humped ancient figure. . . . Finally, her head raises . . . her eyes burn with grief and hate, a single drum, slow and deep, begins. . . . Her voice comes from somewhere most people have never been.

PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
MAY ALL YOUR CHILDREN END UP JUNKIES TOO  
YO MAMMY TRICK BY THE POUND TO BUY THAT OUNCE  
YO YOUNG DAUGHTERS  
GIVE RICH OLD DUDES HEAD IN LIMOUSINES TOO  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU

On the perch the Man responds by tightening his grip on his streamers, for a second they flutter.

YOUR WARRIORS MAIMED  
OR ON THE RUN  
YOUR SONGS LAG FOR PENNIES  
ALL NIGHT LONG IN THE BUS DEPOT  
CAUSE THEY AINT GOT NO PLACE TO GO  
AND LOSE TOO  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU

## PUT A CURSE ON YOU

Her raggedy dress fluttering, she floats back and forth across the prison yard-street-stage-Block, twirling and working her words . . . words too close to home, words that no one wants to hear. . . . Her eyes burn, her toothless mouth works and the words spill over her bottom lip — crazy words?

CLOSEST TO HEAVEN YOU GO  
RUM AND COKE AND COCAINE  
AND A JIVE PUSHER  
COME CUTTIN YOUR STUFF WITH TALCUM TOO  
PUT MY CURSE ON YOU  
PUT MY CURSE ON YOU  
YOUR YOUNG FOLKS  
STOMP EACH OTHERS BRAINS TOO  
CAUSE ALL THAT MEANNESS SQUEEZED IN EM  
AIN'T GOT NOTHING ELSE TO DO  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU

The pulse of the music grows more and more intense as other instruments join in. . . . She does the little half steps of a priestess.

MAY THE BLOCK GOBBLE UP YOUR FUTURES TOO  
AND THEM RATS COME SLIPPIN OUT YOUR TRASH  
AND SLIDIN INTO YOUR CHILDRENS CRIBS TOO  
PUT MY CURSE ON YOU  
PUT MY CURSE ON YOU  
GONNA FIX IT SO YOU MENFOLK  
CANT SEE NO BEAUTY IN YO' WOMENFOLK TOO  
SO YOU MENFOLKS BE BOYS  
TO THE MAN  
AND TO YOUR WOMENFOLK TOO  
IM PUTTING A CURSE ON YOU  
IM PUTTING A CURSE ON YOU

The music and her movements keep growing bigger. . . . On the Block, folks still stand frozen against the wall, each clutching his ribbon like puppets in a store window — her voice working a spell.

LET EM WORK YOUR PLAYGROUNDS TOO  
LET EM DIVVY UP YOUR BABIES TOO  
PUSHER TAKE THE ARM  
PUT EM ON THE LINE TOO  
PIMP GET THE BEHIND  
TEACHER GET THE MIND

She sweeps to the paper bag and brings out a monkeytail fly switch, a powerful juju. She waves the wand and points it at the world, her eyes like volcano craters, each word a projectile.

PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
MAY YOUR FOLKS KISS THE ASS  
OF YOUR ENEMIES. GOD TOO  
AND EVERY TIME YOU START GETTING HIP TO THE OLD ONE  
LET THE MAN LAY A NEW HYPE???

PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU

She waves the monkey's tail exorcising the slave mentality, the apathy, the disunity, the inferiority, the fear . . . The figure on the perch begins to leak.

YOU GO FROM ONE BAG A DAY TO TWO  
FROM TWO TO THREE  
FROM THREE TO FOUR  
AND YOUR HIT COME UPPING THE JONES ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
MAY THE MAN FEAST ON YOUR GOOSE TOO  
POLICE CHOMP ON YOUR CHILDRENS HEAD TOO  
AND CACKLE AT THEIR MOANS TOO  
AND THE MAFIA GET TO WORK THE CARCASS  
AND SUCK YOUR BONES TOO

The Puppet people's eyes begin to move. . . . She spins on like a dervish . . .

PUT A CURSE ON YOU

The figures come to life and move forward, still holding the strings . . . the streamers ripple, then stretch, then break . . .

PUT A CURSE ON YOU

The Block — Playground — Prison fades away and the line of expuppets advance on the world . . .

PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU  
PUT A CURSE ON YOU